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THE

CRUISE OF THE MIDGE.

REPRINTED FROM BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE,
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THE
CRUISE OF THE MIDGE.

BY THE
AUTHOR OF "TOM CRINGLE'S LOG."

"ON LIFE'S VAST OCEAN DIVERSELY WE SAIL,
REASON THE CARD, BUT PASSION IS THE GALE."

ESSAY ON MAN

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS, EDINBURGH;
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THE

CRUISE OF THE MIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

GAZELLES AND MIDGES—THE MIDGE'S WINGS
ARE SINGED.

BORN an Irishman, the son of an Irishwoman ; educated in Scotland, the country of my father, an ancient mariner, who, as master and supercargo, had sailed his own ship for many years in the Virginia trade ; removed to England at the age of seventeen, in consequence of his death ; I had, by the time I arrived at majority, passed four years of my mercantile apprenticeship in my paternal uncle's counting-house, an extensive merchant in that modern Tyre, the enterprising town of Liverpool ; during which period, young as I was, I had already made four voyages in different vessels of his to foreign parts—to the West Indies, the Brazils, the Costa Firme, and the United States of America.

Being naturally a rambling, harumscarum sort of a young chap, this sort of life jumped better with my disposition than being perched on the top of a tall

mahogany tripod, poring over invoices, daybooks, journals, and ledgers, with the shining ebony-coloured desk jammed into the pit of my stomach below, and its arbour of bright brass rods constantly perverting the integrity of my curls above ; so at the period when the scene opens, I had with much ado prevailed on my uncle to let me proceed once more on a cruise, instead of a senior clerk, in charge of two of his ships, bound to the African coast, to trade for ivory and gold dust, and to fill up with palm oil and hardwood timbers.

I had no small difficulty in carrying this point, as the extreme insalubrity of the climate, the chance of being plundered by the semi-piratical foreign slavers, to say nothing of the danger of a treacherous attack on the part of the natives themselves, weighed heavily against my going in my worthy uncle's mind ; but I had set my heart on it, and where “there's a will, there's a way.”

I will not conceal, however, that after all, when it came to the point, I do not believe he would have allowed me to depart, had it not been for a prank of mine, which put him into a towering passion with me about this time.

On the occasion of a rejoicing for one of our great victories, being hand-and-glove with all the skippers and mates of the vessels belonging to the concern, I smuggled up to our house on Everton Terrace, unknown to my uncle, two boat guns, six-pounder caronnades, and a lot of fire-works, by bribing the brewer's man to carry them for me in his cart. Having

achieved this part of my plan, with the aid of two young tars, I contrived to mount the guns in the summer-house, immediately beneath the dining-room window ; and having loaded them, I set fire to slow matches, fitted to the touch-holes, just as the dinner bell rang ; and then calmly took my place at table, facing mine uncle.

The old gentleman was rather a quiet-going codger, and during meals seldom annoyed his neighbours with too much conversation—in the present case, he had eaten his soup, his bit of fish, and was just raising his first glass of wine to his lips—when *bang* went one of my carronades, and smash fell the glass—the madeira flowing all down his lap. He had not recovered his equanimity, when *bang* went gun No. 2, and up shot a whole constellation of rockets and Roman candles, from the garden, whereat he fairly sprang off his chair, as if the explosion had taken place in the cushion of it, or he had been hoisted out of his socket by some sort of catamaran.

His first impulse was to run to the open window ; whiz! a *live* rocket, or large squib, I forget which, flew in over his shoulder, and nearly popped down the throat of the old serving-man, who stood like a statue open mouthed before the sideboard, petrified with astonishment ; as it was, it scorched the powdered curl over his left ear, missing his head by a mere hair's breadth.

The guns I could account for, but the erratic course of this missile surprised me exceedingly. At one fell swoop, it had cleared the sideboard of glasses, decanters, silver waiters, and the sinumbra lamp ; driven

my revered uncle to the top of the table for refuge; and then, as if still unsatisfied with all this mischief, it began to jump about under it, blazing and hissing like a fiery serpent, first in this corner, then under that chair; while old Peregrine, the waiting-man (whose ice had at length thawed), and I were dancing after it; knocking our heads together, and breaking our shins against chairs and the edges of the table, making glasses and decanters ring again, in a vain endeavour to seize hold of the stick. The row soon brought up the other servants, groom, cook, housemaid, &c. &c. &c., towards whom, as if possessed with some spirit of mischief, it fizzed through the door, in its transit, nearly taking one of the female domestics in reverse, whereat they all began to scream as if they had been murdered; then up stairs it rattled, as if desirous of visiting the drawing-room floor, poking its snout into every cranny, hissing and wriggling its tail, and putting the entire array to flight with its vagaries. It was too absurd to see a whole household of grown people thus chasing a live sky-rocket like so many children—"up stairs, down stairs, and in my lady's chamber"—so presently we were all, excepting the rocket itself, brought to a stand still, by fits of laughter.

Although it was clear the heroic firework was not to be captured alive, yet, at length, like the vapouring of a passionate man, it spluttered itself out, and was captured, stick and all, by the old cook, whose property it had invaded; and I returned to the dining-room.

My uncle had by this time reseated himself at the table, looking as black as thunder, with old Peregrine planted once more behind his chair, as stiff as if he had literally swallowed the rocketstick. I sat down, feeling not a little awkward ; the dead silence becoming every moment more and more irksome. The old gentleman seemed to suffer under this, as well as myself, and to have come to the conclusion that it would be more sociable, even to break out into a regular scold, than hold his tongue any longer.

" So, Master Benjamin, a new piece of practical wit of yours, I presume."

" Indeed, my dear sir, I am very sorry—the guns I plead guilty to ; but who can have fired the rockets ?"

" Ah—as if you did not know"—quoth uncle Peter.

" Indeed, uncle, I do not, unless the fusees have caught from the wadding of these cursed guns ;" which, in fact, was the case—" I am sure I wish they had been at the bottom of the Mersey since they have made you angry, uncle."

There was another awful pause—during which, in came a message from Mr Pigwell, one of the neighbours, to ask if any accident had occurred—" No no," said uncle Peter testily—" no accident, only a small mistake."

Another dead lull—presently the old servant, who had gone to the lobby to deliver the message, returned into the room, and as he placed a fresh bottle of wine on the table, he said—" The man says Mrs Pigwell has got a sad fright, sir—taken in labour, sir."

" There, Master Benjamin, *there*—I am sure I wish you had gone to the coast of Africa before this

had happened—I was an old soft hearted fool to stand in the way."

" Well, my dear uncle, it is not too late yet"—said I, a good deal piqued. Not a word from him—" I am sorry to see you have taken such offence where none was meant. It was a piece of folly, I admit, and I am sincerely sorry for it." Still silent—" Jennings is still at anchor down below—I can easily be ready to-morrow, and there is no appearance of the wind changing—so, pray, do let me go."

" You may go to the devil, sir, for me"—and off he started, fizzing, worse than the rocket itself, with rage to his dressing-room, where he often used to pass an hour or two in the evenings alone.

I sat still, guzzling my wine in great wrath.—Enter Peregrine again. I was always a favourite with the old fellow, although he had been seriously angry at first, when he saw that my absurd prank had put his old master so cruelly out. Now, however, I perceived he was anxious to make up for it.

" Lord, Master Benjamin, your uncle is in such a taking you never se'ed—why, do you know, the first thing he did when he went to his dressing-room was to hang his wig on the lighted candle, instead of the pillar of the looking glass; and then we were all in darkness, you see—so, in groping my way out, I popped my foot into the hot water in the foot-pail that he had ordered up, and this scalded me so, that, forgetting where I was, I could not help swearing a bit, Master Benjamin ;—on which he opened the door, and thrust me out, neck and crop, calling me a blasphemous old villain—although we all know he is not

slack at a good rousing oath himself when his bristles are up ; but to call me an old blasphemer—*me!* who have served him faithfully for thirty years, in various parts of the world—a blasphemous old villain, indeed !”

I saw no more of my uncle that night, and when we met next morning at breakfast, I was rejoiced to find the gale had blown itself out.

When I sat down, he looked across the table at me, as if expecting me to speak, but as I held my peace, the good old man opened the conference himself.

“ Why, Benjie, my boy, I have been laughing over our fright, yesterday; but have done with your jokes, Master, if you please, and no more about that infernal coast of”—

“ Mr Pigwell has just called, sir,” quoth old Peregrine, entering at this moment—“ and desires me to say that Mrs Pigwell is brought to bed, sir, and *all* doing well, sir, notwithstanding the fright.”

“ Glad of it, Peregrine—my compliments—wish him joy—but *all*, what do you mean by *all*? ”

“ She has got twins, sir.”

“ The deuce ! twins ! ”

“ Yes, sir, *three* on 'em, sir.”

“ An Irish pair,” said I.

“ Two girls and a boy.”

“ Hillo,” I continued—“ why, I only fired *two* guns ! ”

“ Oh, pilgarlic goes for the rocket,” cried my uncle, laughing—“ but *there* spoke your mother, you Patlander, you—*there* shone out Kilkenny, Benjie. Oh dear, oh dear—two girls and a boy—old Pigwell's young wife brought to bed of—two carronades and a rocket—ha, ha, ha.”

We walked down to the counting-house together as lovingly as ever, but my star was now in the ascendant, for there we found Captain Jennings, who informed my uncle that he had been obliged that morning to land Mr Williamson, the clerk, who was about proceeding in charge of the expedition, in consequence of his having been taken alarmingly ill.

This was most unfortunate, as the wind appeared on the eve of coming fair.

“ We shall have a breeze before next flood, that will take us right round the Head—I hope you won’t detain us in the river, sir ? ” quoth Jennings.

My uncle was puzzled what to do, as it so happened that none of the other youngsters at the moment in the employ had ever been away in such a capacity before ; so I availed myself of the opportunity to push my request home, and it was finally fixed that forenoon that I should take Mr Williamson’s place.

A very old friend of my deceased father’s, Sir Oliver Oakplank, was at this time the senior officer on the African coast, and as the time was approaching when, according to the usual routine of that service, he would be departing on the round voyage for Jamaica and Havanna, before proceeding to England to refit, it was determined, if I could arrange the lading of our ships in time, that I should take a passage with him, for the twofold object of seeing an uncle, by my mother’s side, who was settled in Jamaica, and from whom I had expectations ; and making certain speculations in colonial produce at Havanna.

As I had the credit of being a sharpish sort of a shaver, and by no means indiscreet, although fond of fun, I had much greater license allowed me in my written instructions than my uncle was in the habit of conceding to any of my fellow quill-drivers, who had been previously despatched on similar missions. I had in fact a roving commission as to my operations generally. The very evening on which I got leave to go, the ship rounded the Rock Perch, and nothing particular occurred until we arrived at the scene of our trading. I very soon found that neither the dangers nor difficulties of the expedition had been exaggerated ; on the contrary, the reality of both very far exceeded what I had made up my mind to expect. First of all, I lost more than a half of both crews in the course of two months, and the master of one of the ships amongst them ; secondly, I was plundered and ill-used by a villainous Spanish slaving polacre, who attacked us without rhyme or reason while lying quietly at anchor pursuing our trade in the Bonny river. Not dreaming of any danger of this kind, except from the natives, we allowed the Dons to come on board before we offered any resistance, and then it was too late to do so effectually ; however, at the eleventh hour, we did show some fight, whereby I got my left cheek pierced with a boarding pike or boat-hook, which I repaid by a slashing blow with a cutlass, that considerably damaged the outward man of the Don who had wounded me. I verily believe we should have all been put to

death in consequence, had it not been for the Spanish captain himself, who, reminding the villains that it was not fighting but *plunder* they had come for, made them knock off from cracking our crowns, and betake themselves to searching for dollars, and boxing us all up in the round house until they had loaded themselves with every thing they chose to take away. However, notwithstanding this mishap, I finally brought my part of the operation to a successful issue, by completing the loading of the ships, and seeing them fairly off for England within the time originally contemplated. I then joined the commodore at Cape Coast, where I met with a most cordial reception from him, and also from my cousin, Dick Lanyard, one of his lieutenants.

Through the kind offices of this youngster, I soon became as good as one of the Gazelles ; indeed, notwithstanding I was the commodore's guest, I was more in the gun-room than any where else ; and although not quite *selon les regles*, I contrived, during the time the frigate remained on the coast after I joined her, to get away now and then in the boats, my two months' experience in the rivers having rendered me an accomplished pilot ; and being in no way afraid of the climate, I thus contrived to make one in any spree where there was likely to be fun going, even more frequently than my turn of duty would have entitled me to, had I been really an officer of the ship.

Unless there be something uncongenial or posi-

tively repulsive about one, a person in my situation, with a jovial hearty turn, and a little money in his pockets to add a streak of comfort to a mess now and then, becomes to a certainty a mighty favourite with all the warrant and petty officers, boatswain's mates, old quartermasters, *et hoc genus omne*; and I flatter myself that had I gone overboard, or been killed in any of the skirmishes that, with the recklessness of boyhood, I had shoved my nose into, there would have been as general a moan made for me along the 'tween decks, as for the untimely demise of poor Dicky Phantom, the monkey.

My friend, the aforesaid Dick, had been for six months fourth lieutenant of H.M.S. Gazelle, on board of which, as already mentioned, Sir Oliver Oakplank had his broad pennant* hoisted, as the commander-in-chief on the African station.

The last time they had touched at Cape Coast they took in a Spanish felucca, that had been previously cut out of the Bonny river, with part of her cargo of slaves on board.

She had cost them a hard tussle, and several of the people had fallen by the sword in the attack, but more afterwards from dysentery and marsh fever, the seeds of which had doubtless been sown in the pestilential estuary at the time of the attack; although there is no disputing that they were much more virulently developed afterwards than they would otherwise have been, by a week's exposure in open boats to the dele-

* A broad red swallow-tailed flag, carried at the main-royal masthead, indicative of the rank of commodore.

terious changes of the atmosphere. The excellent commodore, therefore, the father of his crew, seeing the undeniable necessity of lessening the exposure of the men in such a villainous climate, instantly wrote home to the Admiralty, requesting that half-a-dozen small vessels might be sent to him, of an easy draught of water, so that they might take charge of the boats, and afford a comfortable shelter to their crews ; at the same time that they should be able to get over the bars, without damage, of the various African rivers, where the contraband Guineamen were in the habit of lurking. To evince that he practised what he preached, he instantly fitted out the captured felucca on his own responsibility, manned her with five-and-twenty men, and gave the command of her to the third lieutenant.

She had been despatched about a fortnight before in the direction of Fernando Po, and we had stood in on the morning of the day on which my narrative commences, to make cape Formosa, which was the rendezvous fixed on between us. About three o'clock, P.M., when we were within ten miles of the cape, without any appearance of the tender, we fell in with a Liverpool trader, bound to the Brass river to load palm oil and sandalwood. She reported that the night before they had come across a Spaniard, who fired into them, when they sheered-to with an intent to speak him. The master said that, when first seen, the strange sail was standing right in for the river ahead of us ; and, from the noises he heard, he was sure he had negroes on board. It was therefore con-

jected that she was one of the vessels who had taken in part of her cargo of slaves at the Bonny river, and was now bound for the Nun or Brass river to complete it. They were, if any thing, more confirmed in this, by the circumstance of his keeping away and standing to the south-west the moment he found they were hauling in for the land, as if anxious to mislead them, by inducing a belief that he was off for the West Indies or Brazil. This was the essence of the information received from the Liverpool-man ; but from the description of the Don, taking also into account the *whereabouts* he was fallen in with, I had no doubt in my own mind of his being the very identical villain who had plundered me. The same afternoon we fell in with an American, who rejoiced our hearts by saying that he had been chased by a vessel in the forenoon answering the description of the felucca. Immediately after we hove about, and stood out to sea again, making sail in the direction indicated. In consequence of our overhauling this vessel, the commodore had put off his dinner for an hour ; and when all the ropes had been coiled down, and every thing made snug after tacking, he resumed his walk on the weatherside of the quarterdeck, in company with Mr David Sprawl, the first lieutenant.

The commodore was a red-faced little man, with a very irritable cast of countenance, which, however, was by no means a true index to his warm heart, for I verily believe that no commander was ever more beloved by officers and men than he was. He had

seen a great deal of service, and had been several times wounded ; once, in particular, very badly by a grape-shot, that had shattered his left thigh, and considerably shortened it, thereby giving him a kick in his gallop, as he himself used to phrase it, until the day of his death. He was a wag in his way, and the officer now perambulating the deck alongside of him was an unfailing source of mirth ; although the commodore never passed the limits of strict naval etiquette, or the bounds of perfect good breeding in his fun. The gallant old fellow was dressed in faded nankeen trowsers—discoloured cotton stockings—shoes, with corn-holes cut in the toes—an ill-washed and *rumpled* white Marseilles waistcoat—an old blue uniform coat, worn absolutely threadbare, and white and soapy at the seams and elbows ; each shoulder being garnished with a faded gold lace strap, to confine the epaulets when mounted, and that was only on a Sunday. His silk neckcloth had been most probably black *once*, but now it was a dingy brown ; and he wore a most shocking bad hat—an old white beaver, with very broad brims, the snout of it fastened back to the crown with a lanyard of common spunyarn ; buttoned up, as it were, like the *chapeaux* in Charles the Second's time, to prevent it flapping down over his eyes. He walked backwards and forwards very quickly, taking two steps for Sprawl's one, and whenever he turned he gave a loud stamp, and swung briskly about on the good leg as if it had been a pivot, giving a most curious indescribable flou-

rish in the air with the wounded limb in the round-coming, like the last quiver of Noblet's leg in an expiring pirouette.

Lieutenant Sprawl, the officer with whom he was walking and keeping up an animated conversation, was also in no small degree remarkable in his externals, but in a totally different line. He was a tall man, at the very least six feet high, and stout in proportion ; very square-shouldered ; but, large as he was, his coat seemed to have been made to fit even a stouter person, for the shoulder-straps (I think that is the name) projected considerably beyond his shoulders, like the projecting eaves of a Swiss cottage, thus giving the upper part of his figure a sharp ungainly appearance. Below these wide-spreading upperworks he tapered away to nothing at the loins, and over the hips he was not the girth of a growing lad. His thighs were very short, but his legs, from the knee down, were the longest I ever saw in man, reversing all one's notions of proportion or symmetry, for they gradually swelled out from the knee, until they ended in the ankle, which emulated, if it did not altogether surpass, the calf in diameter. When you looked at him in a front view, his lower spars, from the knee down, were a facsimile of the letter V reversed ; that is, with the apex uppermost, while the long splay feet formed the strokes across at the bottom, into which the shanks or shin-bones were morticed amidships as nearly as may be, so that the heel projected aft very nearly as far as the toe did forward, as if he had been built after the

model of an Indian proa, to sail backwards or forwards as might be required, without either tacking or wearing. These formidable looking props were conspicuously stuck out before him, where they kept cruising about, of their own accord apparently, as if they were running away with the man ; while, as he walked, he vehemently swung his arms backwards and forwards, as if they had been paddles necessary to propel him ahead, carrying on leisurely when he first turned, but gradually increasing his pace as he proceeded, until he sculled along at a terrible rate. His head was very large, and thatched with a great fell of coarse red hair, hanging down in greasy masses on each side of his pale freckled visage, until it blended into two immense whiskers, which he cultivated under his chin with such care, that he appeared to be peeping through a fur collar, like a Madagascar ourang-outang. His eyes were large, prominent, and of a faded blue, like those of a dead fish ; his general loveliness being diversified by a very noticeable squint. He had absolutely no eyebrows, but a curious nondescript sort of tumble-out forehead, as like an ill-washed winter-turnip in its phrenological developement as one could well imagine; and as for his nose, it had the regular twist of a rifleman's powder-horn. But his lovely mouth, who shall describe it? Disdaining to claim acquaintance with the aforesaid beak, it had chosen its site under the left eye, so that a line—I here address myself to mathematical readers—drawn from the innermost corner of the right eye, and intersecting the tip of the snout,

would have touched the starboard corner of the aforesaid hole in his face—it could be dignified with no other name ; for, in sober reality, it more resembled a gash in a pumpkin, made by a clumsy bill-hook, than any thing else.

Lips he had none ; and the first impression on one's mind when you saw him naturally led one to exclaim, Bless me—what an oddity ! The man has no mouth —until he did make play with his potato-trap, and then to be sure it was like a gap suddenly split open in a piece of mottled freestone. It was altogether so much out of its latitude, that when he spoke it seemed *aside*, as the players say ; and when he drank his wine, he looked for all the world as if he had been pouring it into his ear.

So now, if the admiring reader will take the trouble to dress this Beauty, I will furnish the apparel. *Imprimis*, he wore a curious *wee* hat, with scarcely any brim, the remains of the nap bleached by a burning sun, and splashed and matted together from the peltting of numberless showers and the washing up of many a salt-sea spray, but carefully garnished, nevertheless, with a double stripe of fresh gold-lace, and a naval button on the left side. Add to this, an old-fashioned uniform coat, very far *through*, as we say ; long-waisted, with remarkably short skirts, but the strap for the epaulet new and bright as the loop on the hat. Now, then, swathe him in a dingy white kerseymere waistcoat, over which dangles a great horn eye-glass, suspended by a magnificent new broad watered black ribbon ; and, finally, take the trouble to

shrowd the lower limbs of the Apollo in ancient duck trowsers, extending about half-way down the calf of the leg, if calf he had ; leaving his pillar-like ankles conspicuously observable ; and you will have a tolerably accurate idea of the presence and bearing of our amiable and accomplished shipmate, Mr David Sprawl.

Rum subject as he certainly was to look at, yet he was a most excellent warm-hearted person at bottom ; straightforward and kind to the men ; never blazoning or amplifying their faults, but generally, on the other hand, softening them ; and often astonishing the poor fellows by his out-of-the-way and unexpected kindness and civility. Indeed, he plumed himself on the general polish of his manners, whether to equals or inferiors, and the Gazelles repaid the compliment by christening him, at one time, "Old Bloody Politeful," and "David Doublepipe" at another, from a peculiarity that we shall presently describe.

You must know, therefore, that this remarkable personage was possessed of a very uncommon accomplishment, being neither more nor less than a natural ventriloquist, for he had two distinct voices, as if he had been a sort of living double flageolet ; one a *falsetto*, small and liquid, and clear as the note of an octave flute ; the other sonorous and rough, as the groaning of a trombone. In conversation, the alternations, apparently involuntary, were so startling and abrupt, that they sounded as if ever and anon the keys of the high and low notes of an organ had been alternately struck ; so instantaneously were the small

notes snapped off into the lower ones, and *vice versa*—so that a stranger would, in all probability, have concluded, had he not known the peculiarities of the Adonis, that a little midshipman was at one moment squeaking up the main hatchway from the hold ; and at the next answered by a boatswain's mate on deck. Indeed, while the commodore and his subaltern pursued their rapid walk, backwards and forwards, on the quarterdeck, the fine, manly, sailor-like voice of the old man, as it intertwined with the octave flute note and the grumbling bass of David Sprawl, like a three-strand rope of gold thread, silver thread, and tarry spunyarn, might have given cause to believe that the two were accompanied in their perambulations by some invisible familiar, who chose to take part in the conversation, and to denote his presence through the ear, while to the eye he was but thin air. However, maugre appearances and the oddity of his conformation, friend Sprawl was physically the most powerful man on board ; and that was saying something, let me tell you.

Thus beloved by the men, to his brother-officers he was the most obliging and accommodating creature that ever was invented. Numberless were the petty feuds which he soldered, that, but for his warm-hearted intervention, might have eventuated in pistol-shots and gunpowder ; and the mids of the ship actually adored him. If leave to go on shore, or any little immunity was desired by them, “ Old Bloody Politeful ” was the channel through which their requests ran ; and if any bother was to be eschewed, or

any little fault sheltered, or any sternness on the part of the commodore or any of the lieutenants to be mollified,—in fine, if any propitiation of the higher powers was required, who interceded but “ Davie Doublepipe ?” In a word, men and midshipmen would have fought for him to the last gasp ; and although they did laugh a little at his oddities now and then, they always came back to this,—“ He is the best seaman and the bravest man in the ship,” as indeed repeated trials had proved him to be.

The remarkable couple that I have taken so much pains to describe to you continued to stump along the quarterdeck, backwards and forwards, very rapidly ; and at the end of every turn, Sprawl, in place of *tacking* with his face to his companion, invariably *wore* with his back to him, and so lumbersome and slowly, that the commodore usually had wheeled, and stood facing him, ready to set forth on his promenade long before Mr Sprawl came round ; so that, while his back was towards him, he had an opportunity of giving his broad shoulders a quizzical reconnoitring glance, which he instantly exchanged for the most sedate and sober expression, when our friend at length hove about and fronted him. This contrast between the fun of the commodore’s expression when his subaltern’s back was towards him, and its solemnity when he turned his face, was most laughable ; more especially, that he always met Sprawl, as he came to the wind, with a sidling bow, before he made sail in his usual pace ; which slight inclination the lieutenant answered with a formal inclination of his whole

strange corpus, whereby he stopped his way to such a degree, that Sir Oliver had filled on the other tack, and shot three or four strides ahead ; whereby Sprawl had to clap the steam on at a very high pressure, in order to scull up alongside of his superior, before he arrived at the other wheeling point, the break of the quarter-deck.

The postponed dinner-hour having at length arrived, the commodore, making a formal salaam, dived to enjoy his meal, whereof I was the only partaker this day beside himself ; and nothing particular occurred until the following morning.

The next forenoon Dick Lanyard was the officer of the watch, and, about nine o'clock, the commodore, who had just come on deck, addressed him :—“ Mr Lanyard, do you see any thing of the small hooker yet, to windward there ?”

“ I thought I saw something like her, sir, about half an hour ago ; but a blue haze has come rolling down, and I cannot make any thing out at present.”

“ She must be thereabouts somewhere, however,” continued he, “ as she was seen yesterday by the Yankee brig,—so keep by the wind until four bells, Mr Lanyard, and then call me, if you please.”

“ Ay, ay, sir ;” and he resumed his walk on the weather-side of the quarterdeck.

In a couple of hours we were all on deck again ; as the breeze freshened the mist blew off, and in half an hour the felucca was seen about three miles to

windward of us, staggering along before it, like a large nautilus, under her solitary lateen sail ;—presently she was close aboard of us.

I was looking steadfastly at the little vessel as she came rolling down before the wind, keeping my eye on the man that was bending on the ensign haul-yards. First of all, he began to hoist away the ensign, until it reached about half-way between the end of the long, drooping, wirelike yard and the deck ; he then jerked it upwards and downwards for a minute, as if irresolute whether to run it chokeup, or haul it down again ; at length it hung half-mast high, and blew out steadily.

My mind suddenly misgave me, and I looked for the pennant ; it was also hoisted half-mast—“ Alas ! alas ! poor Donovan,” I involuntarily exclaimed—but loud enough to be overheard by the commodore, who stood by—“ another victim to this horrid coast.”

“ What is wrong, Mr Brail ?” said Sir Oliver.

“ I fear Mr Donovan is dead, sir. The felucca’s ensign and pennant are half-mast, sir.”

“ Bless me, no—surely not !” said the excellent old man ;—“ hand me the glass.—Too true—too true—where is all this to end ?” said he with a sigh.

The felucca was now within long pistol-shot of our weather-quarter, standing across our stern, with the purpose of rounding-to under our lee. At this time Sir Oliver was looking out close by the tafferel, with his trumpet in his hand. I was again peering through

the glass. “ Why, there is the strangest figure come on deck, on board the Midge, that I ever saw—what can it be? Sir Oliver, will you please to look at it ? ”

The commodore took the glass with the greatest good-humour, while he handed me his trumpet,—“ Really,” said he, “ I cannot tell—Mr Sprawl, can you ? ” Sprawl—honest man—took his spell at the telescope—but *he* was equally unsuccessful. The figure that was puzzling us was a half-naked man, in his shirt and trowsers, with a large blue shawl bound round his head, who had suddenly jumped on deck, with a hammock thrown over his shoulders as if it had been a dressing gown ; the clew hanging half-way down his back, while the upper part of the canvass-shroud was lashed tightly round his neck, but so as to leave his arms and legs free scope ; and there he was strutting about with the other clew trailing away astern of him, like the train of a lady’s gown, as if he had in fact been arrayed in what was anciently called a curricle-robe. Over this extraordinary array there was slung a formidable Spanish *trabuco*, or blunderbuss, across his body ; and one hand, as he walked backwards and forwards on the small confined deck of the felucca, held a large green silk umbrella over his head, although the sail of itself was shade enough at the time ; while the other clutched a speaking trumpet.

The craft, freighted with this uncouth apparition, was very peculiar in appearance. She had been a Spanish gun-boat—originally a twin-sister to one that

Gazelle had, during the war, cut out from Rosas bay. She was about sixty feet long over all, and seventeen feet beam ; her deck being as round as her bottom ; in fact she was more like a long cask than any thing else, but with a most beautiful run notwithstanding, and without exception the roomiest vessel of her size that I ever saw. She had neither bulwarks, quarters, nor rail, nor in fact any ledge whatever round the gunnel, so that she had no use for scuppers. Her stern, peaked up like a New Zealand war-canoe, tapering away to a point, which was perforated to receive the rudder-head, while forward she had a sharp beak, shaped like the proa of a Roman galley ; but she was as strong as wood and iron could make her—her bottom being a perfect bed of timbers, so that they might have been caulked—and tight as a bottle. What answered to a bowsprit was a short thumb of a stick about ten feet high, that rose at an angle of thirty degrees ; and she had only one mast, a strong stump of a spar, about thirty feet high, stayed well forward, in place of raking aft ; high above which rose the large lateen sail already mentioned, with its long elastic spliced and respliced yard tapering away up into the sky, until it seemed no thicker than the small end of a fishing-rod when bent by the weight of the line and bait. It was of immense length, and consisted of more than half a dozen different pieces. Its heavy iron-shod heel was shackelled, by a chain a fathom long, to a strong iron-bar, or bolt, that extended athwart the forepart of the little vessel, close to the heel of the bowsprit, and to

which it could be hooked and unhooked, as need were, when she tacked, and it became necessary to jib the sail.

The outlandish-looking craft slowly approached, and we were now within hail. “I hope nothing is amiss with Mr Donovan?” sung out the commodore.

“By the powers, but there is though!” promptly replied the curious figure with the trumpet and umbrella, in a strong clear voice.—A pause.

All our glasses were by this time levelled at the vessel, and every one more puzzled than another what to make of it.

“Who are you, sir?” again asked the commodore. “Where is Mr Donovan?”

Here Mr Binnacle, a midshipman on board, hailed us through his hand, but we could not hear him; on which the man in the hammock struck him, without any warning, across the pate with his trumpet. The midshipman and the rest of the crew, we could see, now drew close together forward, and, from their gestures, seemed to be preparing to make a rush upon the figure who had hailed.

Sir Oliver repeated his question—“Who are you, sir?”

“Who am I, did you say? That's a good one,” was the answer.

“Why, Sir Oliver,” said I, “I believe *that* is Mr Donovan himself. Poor fellow, he must have gone mad.”

“No doubt of it—it is so, sir,” whistled Sprawl.

Here the crew of the felucca, led by little Binnacle, made a rush aft, seized the lieutenant, and having overpowered him, launched their little shallop, in which the midshipman, with two men, instantly shoved off; but they had not paddled above half a-dozen yards from the vessel's side, when the maniac, a most powerful man, broke from those who held him, knocked them down, right and left, like so many nine-pins, and seizing his *trabuco*, pointed it at the skiff, while he sung out in a voice of thunder—"Come back, Mr Binnacle; come back, you small villain, or I will shoot you dead."

The poor lad was cowed, and did as he was desired.

"Lower away the jolly boat," cried the commodore, in a flaming passion; but checking himself, he continued—"Gently, men—belay there—keep all fast with the boat, Mr Lanyard," who had jumped aft to execute the order—"We must humour the poor fellow, after all, who is evidently not himself."

I could hear a marine, a half crazy creature, of the name of Lennox, who stood by, on this whisper to his neighbour—"Ay, Sir Oliver, better fleech with a madman than fecht with him."

"Are you Mr Donovan, pray?" said the commodore, mildly, but still speaking through the trumpet.

"I *was* that gentleman," was the startling answer.

"Then come on board, man; come on board," in a wheedling tone.

"How would you have me to do that thing?" said

poor Donovan. "Come on board, did you say? Devil now, Sir Oliver, you are mighthy unreasonale."

His superior officer was somewhat shoved off his balance by this most extraordinary reply from his lieutenant, and rapped out, fiercely enough—"Come on board this instant, sir, or by the Lord, I"—

"How can I do that thing, and me dead since three bells in the middle watch last night?" This was grumbled as it were through his trumpet, but presently he shouted out as loud as he could bellow—"I can't come; and, what's more, I won't; for I died last night, and am to be buried whenever it goes eight bells at noon."

"Dead!" said the commodore, now *seriously* angry. "Dead, did he say? Why, he is drunk, gentlemen, and not mad. There is always *some* method in madness; here there is none." Till recollecting himself—"Poor fellow, let me try him a little farther; but really it is too absurd"—as he looked round and observed the difficulty both officers and men had in keeping countenance—"Let me humour him a little longer," continued he. "Pray, Mr Donovan, how can you be dead, and speaking to me now?"

"Because," said Donovan promptly, "I have a forenoon's leave from purgatory to see myself decently buried, Sir Oliver."

Here we could no longer contain ourselves, and notwithstanding the melancholy and humiliating spectacle before us, a shout of laughter burst from all hands fore and aft simultaneously, as the commodore, exceedingly tickled, sung out—"Oh, I see

how it is—I see—so do come on board, Mr Donovan, and we *will* see you properly buried."

" You *see*, Sir Oliver ! " said the poor fellow ; " to be sure you do—a blind horse might persave it."

" I say, Dennis dear," quoth I, " I will be answerable that all the honours shall be paid you." But the deceased Irishman was not to be had so easily, and again refused, point-blank, to leave the Midge.

" Lower away the boat there, Mr Sprawl," said Sir Oliver ; " no use in all this ; you see he won't come. Pipe away her crew, Mr Lanyard, do you hear? So, brisk now—brisk—be off. Take the surgeon with you, and bring that poor fellow on board instantly. Here, Brail, go too, will ye—you are a favourite of his, and probably he will take more kindly to you than any one else."

We shoved off—and in a twinkling we were alongside—" What cheer, Donovan, my darling ? How are you, man, and how do you all do ? "

" Ah, Benjamin, glad to see you, my boy. I hope you have come to read the service : I'm to be buried at noon, you know."

" Indeed ! " said I, " I know nothing of the kind. I have come on board from the commodore to know how you are ; he thought you had been ill."

" Very much obliged," continued the poor fellow ; " all that sort of thing might have brought joy some days ago—but now ! "—

" Well, well, Donovan," said I, " come on board with me, and buried you shall be comfortably from the frigate."

" Well, I will go. This cursed sailmaker of ours has twice this morning refused to lash me up in the hammock, because he chose to say I was not dead ; so go with you I will."

The instant the poor fellow addressed himself to enter the boat, he shrank back like a rabid dog at water. " I cannot—I cannot. Sailmaker, bring the shot aft, and do lash me up in my hammock, and heave me comfortably overboard at once."

The poor sailmaker, who was standing close to, caught my eye, and my ear also. " What shall I do, sir ? " said he.

I knew the man to be a steady, trustworthy person. " Why, humour him, Warren ; humour him. Fetch the shot, and lash him up ; but sling him round the waist by a strong three-inch rope, do you hear."

The man touched his forehead, and slunk away. Presently he returned with the cannon-balls slung in a canvass bag, the usual receptacle of his needles, palms, and thread, and deliberately fastened them round Mr Donovan's legs. He then lashed him up in the hammock, coaxing his arms under the swathing, so that, while I held him in play, he regularly sewed him up into a most substantial strait waistcoat. It would have been laughable enough, if risibility had been pardonable under such melancholy circumstances, to look at the poor fellow as he now stood stiff and upright, like a bolt of canvass on end, swaying about, and balancing himself, as the vessel rolled about on the heave of the sea ; but by this time the sail-

maker had fastened the rope securely round his waist, one end of which was in the clutch of three strong fellows, with plenty of the slack coiled down and at hand, had it proved necessary to pay out, and give him scope.

“ Now, Donovan, dear, come into the boat ; do, and let us get on board, will ye.”

“ Benjamin Brail—I expected kindlier things at your hands, Benjie. How *can* I go on board of the old Gazelle, seeing it has gone seven bells” (although it was in reality five in the afternoon), “ and I’m to be hove overboard at twelve o’clock ? ”

I saw there was nothing else for it, so I whispered little Binnacle to strike eight bells. At the first chime, poor Donovan pricked up his ear ; at the second, he began to settle himself on deck ; and before the last struck, he was stretched out on a grating with his eyes closed, and really as still and motionless as if he had been actually dead. I jumped on board, muttered a sentence or two, from recollection, of the funeral service, and tipping the wink, we hove him bodily, stoop and roop, overboard, where he sank for a couple of fathoms, when we hauled him up again. When he sank, he was much excited, and flushed and feverish to look at ; but when he was now got into the boat, he was still enough, God knows, and very blue and ghastly ; his features were sharp and pinched, and he could only utter a low moaning noise when we had stretched him along the bottom of the boat. “ Mercy ! ” said I, “ surely

my experiment has not killed him?" However, our best plan now was to get back to the frigate as soon as might be, so Lanyard, who had purposely kept in the background, now gave the word to shove off, and in a minute we were all on the Gazelle's quarterdeck; poor Donovan having been hoisted up, lashed into an accommodation chair. He was instantly taken care of, and, in our excellent surgeon's hands, I am glad to say that he recovered, and lived to be an ornament to the service, and a credit to all connected with him for many a long day afterwards.

The first thing little Binnacle did was to explain to Sir Oliver that he had been ill for three days with brain fever, having had a stroke of the sun; but aware of the heavy responsibility of taking forcibly the command of a vessel from one's superior officer, he was allowed to have it all his own way until the Gazelle hove in sight.

"Pray, Mr Binnacle," said the commodore, "have you brought me the letters and the English newspapers?"

"Yes, Sir Oliver; here they are, sir; and here is a memorandum of several vessels expected on this part of the coast that we got from the Cerberus, sir."

"Oh, let me see."

After a long pause, the commodore again spoke.

"Why, Mr Binnacle, I have no tidings of the vessels you speak of; but I suppose we must stand in for the point indicated, and take our chance of falling in with them. But where got you all these men? Did the Cerberus man you?"

“ No, sir, she did not. Ten of the men were landed at Cape Coast, out of the Tobin, Liverpool trader. They are no great things, sir, certainly; they had been mutinous, so the merchantman who unshipped them chose to make the run home with five free negroes instead. But if they be bad, there is not much of them, for they are the smallest men I ever saw.”

The chap who spoke—little Binnacle, viz.—was not quite a giant himself. He was a dapper little blue-jacket, about five feet two. His boat’s, or rather his canoe’s crew, were all very little men, but still evidently full-grown, and not boys. Every thing about the craft he had come from was diminutive, except her late commander. The midshipman was small—the men were all pygmies. The vessel herself could not have carried one of the pyramids of Egypt. The very bandy-legged cur that yelped and scampered along her deck was a small cock-tailed affair that a large Newfoundland *canis* might easily have swallowed for his breakfast.

After Binnacle had made his report to Sir Oliver, he, with an arch smile, handed me the following letter, open, which I have preserved to this hour for the satisfaction of the curious. Many a time have I since laughed and almost cried over this production of poor Donovan’s heated brain :—

“ MY DEAR BRAIL,—When you receive this, I shall be at rest far down amongst the tangleweed and coral branches at the bottom of the deep green sea, another

sacrifice to the insatiable demon of this evil climate—another melancholy addition to the long list of braver and better men who have gone before me. Heaven knows, and I know, and lament with much bitterness therefor, that I am ill prepared to die, but I trust to the mercy of the Almighty for pardon and forgiveness.

"It is now a week since I was struck by a flash of lightning at noonday, when there was not a speck of cloud in the blue sky, that glanced like a fiery dart right down from the fierce sun, and not having my red woollen nightcap on, that I purchased three years ago from old Jabos of Belfast, the Jew who kept a stall near the quay, it pierced through the skull just in the centre of the bald spot, and set my brain a-boiling and poppling ever since, making a noise for all the world like a buzzing bee-hive. I therefore intend to depart this life at three bells in the middle watch this very night, wind and weather permitting. Alas, alas ! who shall tell this to my dear old mother, Widow Donovan, who lives at No. 1050, in Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe ?—or to poor Cathleen O'Haggarty ? You know Cathleen, Benjie ; but you must never know that she has a glass eye—Ah, yes, poor thing, she had only one eye, but that *was* a beauty ; the other was a quaker ;* but then she had five thousand good sterling pounds, all in old Peter Macshane's bank at

* A sham wooden gun.

the back of the Exchange ; and so her one eye was a blessing to me ; for where is the girl with two eyes, and five thousand pounds, all lodged in Peter Macshane's bank at the back of the Exchange, who would have looked at Dennis Donovan, a friendless, penniless lieutenant in the Royal Navy, and son of Widow Donovan, who lives at 1050, Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe ?—Ah, how Cathleen will pipe her real eye—I wonder if she will weep with the false one—I am sure my story might bring tears from a stone, far more a piece of glass—Oh, when she hears I am gone, she will be after breaking her tender little heart—Oh, murder for the notion of it—that's the thought that I can't bear—that is the blow that kills Ned ! The last words of Dennis Donovan, who has nothing on earth to brag of beside a mighty pretty person and a brave soul—that's a good one. Adieu, adieu. God bless the King and the Royal Family entirely.

“ DENNIS DONOVAN,

“ *Lieutenant, R.N., and son of Widow Donovan, who lives at 1050, Sackville Street, Dublin, the widest thoroughfare in Europe.*”

To return.

“ And pray,” said the commodore, “ what captures may you have made in this redoubtable man-of-war of yours—in his Britannic Majesty's felucca, Midge ?”

“ Why, none, sir,” said wee Middy, blushing ;

"but I hope you will soon put us in the way of having a brush, sir."

"We shall see, we shall see," said the good-hearted old sailor; "but come and take a glass of wine, Mr Binnacle, and after you have told Mr Lanyard all about the Midge, what she *has*, and *wants*, &c., get on board again, and keep near us for the evening.—I say, Mr Steelpen," to his clerk, who was lounging about, "Come to the cabin, now, will you, and draw out Mr Lanyard's instructions, as Mr Garboard is still confined to his cot."

This was the second lieutenant, who had been ill for a week with fever.

The moment I knew Lanyard was going in the Midge, I determined to accompany him if possible, so I asked the commodore's leave—hinting, that my knowledge of the rivers might be of use. He laughed.

"Pilot, indeed—mind you don't evaporate in one of your pilotings, and then what shall I say to your friends, Master Benjamin?"

I pressed my suit.

"Why, my good boy, you had better not—take my word for it, if you carry on in this way, you will either get your head broken, or be caught by one of these infernal marsh fevers, which will be worse."

"No fear, Sir Oliver, I am a seasoned cask—do give me leave—I shall be back in a week."

"Well, well, as you please, my young master."

And it was at once so fixed.

Lanyard heard the order given, and instantly set

about getting his kit arranged for his departure, although he seemed to think it would have been more pleasing in his excellent captain had he appeared to have consulted him a little on the subject ; but to hear was to obey, and Dick was quite ready to move by the time he was sent for to receive his orders, when I adjourned to the cabin also, to say good by. Sir Oliver was sitting at his wine ; and so soon as the steward had left us to ourselves, the knight rang the bell, the cord of which, ending in a handsome brass handle, hung within a foot of his head.

“ Potter, send the first lieutenant here.”

Sprawl was in immediate attendance.

“ Glad to see you, Mr Sprawl ; sit down, and take wine.”

After a pause—

“ Do you think, if the breeze holds, that we shall make the land again before morning, Mr Sprawl ?”

“ No, sir, for we have run thirty miles off since morning, and there is no appearance of any wind at present ; but we should be able, notwithstanding, to beat up to it by noon to-morrow.”

“ Very well. Pray, Mr Lanyard, how many men, counting the strangers, are there on board ?”

“ Thirty-three, sir, all told.”

“ And the gun she carries ?”

“ A long twelve, sir, with a six-inch howitzer affair fitted forward, for throwing grape.”

“ Do you think you could stow ten men more, comfortably ?”

Dick had been on board of his new command before he came down, and had made such passing observations as the time permitted.

"Why, I daresay, for a few days we might, sir."

"Then send your purser, or whoever may be acting for him, aboard this evening."

The lieutenant made his bow, whipped off his glass, and went on deck to be off. It was getting dark fast—the wind had risen suddenly—the frigate had been carrying top-gallant sails up to the time I had gone below, but they were now handed, and the watch were in the act of taking a reef in the topsails.

"Whereabouts is the felucca?" said I to the officer of the watch, the old gunner, who, in the absence of Mr Garboard, the second lieutenant, who, as already stated, was sick and in his cot, had charge of the deck.

"Close to, sir," was the reply; but presently he continued, looking over the side, "Deuce take me, sir, if I can see her just at this present"—

"You don't? I say, quartermaster, do you see the small craft down to leeward there?"

"No, sir. I sees nothing of her; but she can't be far away, sir, as she was close to, within this last half hour."

By this time the night had fallen with a heavy dew and a thick haze. Presently we saw a small spark down to leeward.

"Ah," said the man again, "there she is; she is in chase of something, sir."

“ What can they mean ? ” said Lanyard. “ They know they cannot follow out their chase when I am on board here.”

The riddle was soon read. Little Binnacle had returned on board, and, as it turned out, he was determined to have some fun, in the interregnum between the unshipping of poor Donovan and Lanyard’s appointment.

“ What is that abeam of us ? ” said Mr Sprawl, who had now come on deck.—“ Hand me up the night-glass, Jeremy.”

He worked away with it for some time. At length Lanyard spoke.

“ Why, Sprawl, will you have the kindness to fire a gun, and show a light at the mizen peak, as the felucca *must be* hereabouts ? ”

“ True enough, Lanyard, she cannot be far off, but ” — Here we saw another flash, and this time we heard the report of the cannon—“ There,” continued the first lieutenant,—“ there she is, sure enough; but how the devil can you expect her to come up to us, seeing she is cut off by that large craft there ? ” And he pointed a-beam of us, where, following the direction indicated, I soon saw a large vessel, standing under easy sail, on the same tack.

“ Quartermaster,” exclaimed Sprawl, “ keep her away, and edge down towards that chap, will ye ? ”

The commodore was now on deck.

“ I was on the point of reporting to you, sir, that the felucca was a good way off to leeward, apparently

cut off by a strange sail, that is sculling along right between us," said David Doublepipe.

"Whereabouts," said the captain, "whereabouts is this strange sail? And why the deuce did the felucca not fire a gun?"

"She did, sir," answered the lieutenant, "but I could not divine what she would be at, as she did not make the night-signal."

"True enough," said Lanyard.—"I daresay all the signals and instructions, and every thing else, are locked up on board, sir. May I therefore request the favour of your standing down to her, or I don't see how we shall manage at all?"

The weather now cleared, and the fog rose, or blew past. Another flash down to leeward, in the direction of the felucca, and presently she burned a blue light, which cast a lurid wake on the rolling waters, cresting the sparkling waves with a wavering line of unearthly light. It lit up the little vessel and her white sail, and the whole horizon in her neighbourhood, with a blue ghostly glare, across which, as a bright background, we suddenly saw the tall spars, dark sails, and opake hull of a large polacre brig intervene, as she gradually slid along, rising and falling majestically on the midnight sea, between us and the tender.

"Ah ha!" said the commodore. "Why, Master Brail, your retreat is cut off, and all the honour and glory will be gathered by the Midges without you, for there the brig is bearing up—there, she has made

us out, and if the little fellows don't get out of her way, she will run them down."

The black bank in the east now broke away, the newly risen moon shone out bright and suddenly, and we distinctly saw the polacre crowding all sail from us, with the gallant little Midge to leeward of him about half a mile, under easy sail, apparently waiting for him, and standing directly across the bows of his large antagonist, into which he once more fired his long gun, and then as he came down, he luffed up, and hove a capful of grape into him from his howitzer. The chase up to this time had not fired a shot, but continued to crowd all sail, the little fellow now sticking in his skirts like a bur.

The night began to lower again ; the wind fell from a fine working breeze to nearly calm, and the rain soon began to descend in torrents. At length it became stark calm, and as dark as the shrouded moon would let it. But every now and then we could see a tiny flash in the south-east, that for a moment lit up the outline of the black sail of the felucca, making the sweeps and figures of the men that pulled them appear as black as ebony between us and the flash of the forwardmost gun, which, on the other hand, glanced brightly against the stern, sparkled in the windows, and lighted up the snow-white sails of the brig, in pursuit of which the felucca had again bore up ; the wreaths of smoke rising and surrounding both vessels, like a luminous cloud, or a bright halo. Presently the peppering of musketry com-

menced from the Midge, which showed she was overhauling the strange sail, and was immediately returned from the chase, who now lowered his jolly-boat, and began to fire for the first time from his stern chasers. This was in turn brilliantly replied to by the felucca, when all at once the dark lateen sail came down between us and the bright flashes by the run ; on which her fire ceased, the breeze sprung up again, and all was dark. We stood on for ten minutes, when we saw a light right ahead, and before we could shorten sail, were alongside of the felucca—the little vessel, now a confused heap of black wreck, appearing to slide past us like an object seen from a carriage window when travelling rapidly ; although it was the frigate that was in motion, while the Midge lay like a log on the water. Presently the *wee* midshipman—Master Binnacle, who had returned on board of her, as ordered, early in the evening—hailed.

“ He is too big for us, sir ; he has shot away our main haul-yards, and hurt three of our men.”

“ Heave the ship to,” said the commodore ; “ and, Mr Lanyard, go on board with a boat’s crew, take the carpenter with you, and see what is wrong. Keep close by us till morning ; or here,—take him in tow, Mr Sprawl,—to the first lieutenant,—“ take him in tow.”

We went on board Dick’s forlorn command, and found the little vessel a good deal cut up, in hulls, sails, and rigging, and three Midges wounded, but none of them seriously. They were sent on board

the frigate, which made all sail in chase, but next morning, when the day broke, all that we could see of the polacre was a small white speck of her royal, like the wing of a sea-gull, on our leebow ; presently she vanished entirely.

The breeze continued to freshen, and we carried on ; in the afternoon we made the land, near the mouth of the river we had been blockading, and after having run in as close as we thought safe, we hove-to for the night, determined to finish the adventure on the morrow.

By day-break, we were close in with the mouth of the estuary, but we could see nothing of the polacre, and as the climate was none of the wholesomest, we were making up our minds to be off again before the night fell ; when a canoe was seen coming down the muddy flow of the river, which, even a mile or more at sea, preserved its thick brown chocolate colour ; with a square blanket for a sail, and manned by half a dozen naked negroes. She approached, and a rope was hove to her, when she sheered alongside, and the steersman came on board. He was a wild uncultivated savage, and apparently did not understand a word of English, Spanish, or French, but by signs we enquired of him if he had seen any thing of the brig we were pursuing ? He indicated, after his manner, that a big canoe had run up the river with that morning's tide, and was now at anchor above the reach in sight. However, his only object appeared to be to sell his yams and fruit, with which his boat was loaded.

And after he had done so, and we had gotten all the information we could out of him, he shoved off; and we prepared to ascend the river in the felucca, reinforced by ten supernumeraries from the frigate, and accompanied by three of her boats, manned with thirty men and fourteen marines, under the command of Mr Sprawl, in order to overhaul our friend of the preceding evening.

CHAPTER II.

THE ATTACK.

WE stood in, and as we approached I went aloft on the little stump of a mast to look about me. The leaden-coloured sea generally becomes several shades lighter in tropical countries as you approach the shore, unless the latter be regularly up and down, and deep close to. In the present instance, however, although it gradually shoaled, the blue water, instead of growing lighter and greener, and brightening in its approach to the land ; became gradually of a chocolate colour, as the turbid flow of the river feathered out like a fan, all round the mouth of it. But as the tide made, the colour changed, by the turgid stream being forced back again, and before it was high water, the bar was indicated by a semicircle of whitish light green, where the long swell of the sea gradually shortened, until it ended in small tumbling waves that popped about and frothed as if the ebullitions had been hove up and set in motion by some subterraneous fire. But, as yet, the water did not break on any part of the crescent-shaped ledge of sand.

In the very middle of the channel there were three narrow streaks of blue water. We chose the centre

one ; and while the frigate hove-to in the offing, dashed over with a fine breeze, that, from the eddy round the point to windward, was nearly a fair wind up the river. For a minute I thought we were in some peril when passing the *boiling* water on the bar ; but presently we were gliding along the smooth surface of the noble river.

On rounding the first point, right in the middle of the stream lay our friend of the preceding night, moored stem and stern, with boarding nettings up, and Spanish colours flying at the mizen-peak ; but we could see no one on board. Sprawl therefore called a halt, and made the men lie on their oars, as some savage pranks had lately been played by slavers in these rivers, such as laying trains to their magazines when they found capture inevitable, and various other pleasant little surprises, one of which generally served a man for a lifetime. So being desirous of avoiding all chance of a hoist of this kind, we dropped anchor in the felucca, and got the boats alongside, all to the cutter, which was sent to pull round the polacre and reconnoitre. On the officer returning, he said he had seen nothing. We therefore determined to remain quiet for some time longer, to give any trick of the nature glanced at, time to develope itself. We lay for two hours under the most intense heat I ever remember ; the sun was absolutely broiling us alive, for there was not the least breath of air, and the surface of the sluggish river was one polished sheet of silver —the low swampy banks being covered with man-

grove bushes and dwarf palms, preventing any breeze there might be from finding its way to us.

"Now," said Lieutenant Sprawl, "this is really very unentertaining. I say, Benjie, my dear, I think I had better pull under the stern of the polacre to reconnoitre a bit. I will take care that I do not go too near."

"I see no objections to it," said I, "none in the world; but mind your hand, my hearty—don't go too far, as they are slippery chaps these same slaving gentry—that *I* can tell you."

The boat shoved off—we were eating our hasty dinner on deck at the moment—and proceeded without let or hinderance until she arrived within pistol-shot of the polacre, when lo! from amongst the green bushes on the river bank, about musket-shot from them, a burst of white smoke flew up, and several round shot hopped along the calm surface, stirring up the water with whizzing splashes. The next moment the shrieks of the cutter's crew gave notice that they had told in a fearful manner. We looked out a-head. The wreck of the boat, with eight of her crew, including the lieutenant, holding on by it, came floating down to us; she had been knocked to pieces by the fire of the masked battery that had so unexpectedly opened, but the poor devils were promptly picked up; all to one unfortunate fellow who had been killed and now floated past us on his back, with his chest up, and his head down. Old Davie Doublepipe scrambled on board, in nowise greatly put out by his rough reception.

"Why now," said he, "a surprise of this kind is extremely inconvenient."

"But where the deuce came the shot from?" said I.

"The devil only knows," quoth he; "every thing seemed as quiet as could be, when all at once—crash—the shot took us right amidships, and the next moment we were all floundering in the water, like so many pigs overboard."

"Well, well, lucky it is no worse," rejoined honest Dick Lanyard; "but I say, Master Marline," to the senior midshipman of the frigate, who commanded one of the other boats, "we can't lie here to be murdered, so strike out for the polacre, keeping t'other side of the river, and her hull between you and the skulkers; then pull straight for her, but haul off if you see any one on board; and if any annoyance is offered from the shore this time, I will weigh and give our concealed friends a dose of grape."

The boat shoved off, and pulled towards the enemy in the manner directed. All was quiet until she reached within ten yards of her, when a blaze of six pieces of cannon at the fewest once more took place, and eddies of smoke again gushed from the bushes. The boat instantly took the hint, put about, and returned to us. Her stern had been nearly knocked to pieces, and she was leaking so much, that by the time she was alongside, she was full of water, and the men had only time to get out, when she sank to the gunwale.

"By the powers!" said Lanyard, driven off his balance, cool as he was, "but there is mighty little fun in all this. What see you, my man?"—to one of the people who had scrambled up the long yard to reconnoitre from whence the shots had proceeded; but he could give no information. The smoke rolled away down the dull river in white wreaths, growing more and more gauzelike and transparent, as they passed us, and all was quiet, and green, and noiseless on the bank as before; while the sun continued to shine down on us with the same sickening intensity, heating the thick unwholesome air, until it was almost unfit for breathing.

"Something must be done," said I—"we must dislodge these fellows or be off, that is clear."

"Do you think," said Lanyard, addressing himself to the discomfited first lieutenant, who was shaking his feathers, and drying himself as well as he could, "that there is water for us to sheer alongside where these scoundrels are ensconced?"

"I consider there must be," said he, "but we had better remain quiet where we are until night, if they will let us, so that we may be off with the ebb if need be."

The advice was good and discreet. So Old Bloody Politeful, Dick Lanyard, and I set to clean our beautiful persons, and make ourselves as comfortable as our scanty means permitted, while the men did the same. It was now near five P.M., and the tide began to flow again. As there were two good hours day-

light still, we determined to prove our friends a little further, rather than lie inactive any longer—the same restless feeling had spread to the men.

“The tide is on the turn now, sir,” said the old quartermaster.

“Then all hands up anchor—weigh, and sweep in close to that dwarf palm there.”

The smoke had come from a spot close under its shade.

“Hurrah!” shouted the men.

The anchor was catted—the sweeps were manned—the guns were loaded with grape—the marines stood to their arms, and in five minutes we were once more at anchor, with the two boats in tow, within half-pistol shot of the bank. All remained still. Not a breath stirred the leaves of the mangrove bushes, or the jungle of wild cane that grew close to the river brink. I was sure we were directly opposite the spot from whence the shots were fired.

Whenever we were fairly settled in our position, we let drive both guns. The grape pattered in the water, and rattled amongst the leaves of the trees, but all continued still as death. We loaded and fired again; but as we had only one boat untouched, Mr Sprawl determined, instead of attempting a landing, in order to cope with enemies whom we could not see, to weigh and sweep towards the brig again, with the intention, if opportunity offered, of boarding her. But the moment we turned our stern to the shore, and began to pull in that direction—bang—several cannon were again fired at us, in this instance

loaded with round and grape, but fortunately missed us this time.

"Pull, men, like fury ; give way, and clap the hull of the brig between you and our honest friends there." Crack—another rally from the masked battery ; the next minute, we had swept round the stern of the polacre, and were alongside. Lanyard laid hold of the manrope—"Now, men, there can be no tricks here, or they would have shown themselves before now ; so, follow me." The rope gave in his grasp, and a gun exploded on board. Dick fell back on the deck of the felucca. "Cast off your fastenings, and sheer off, my lads, or we may get a hoist we don't dream of."

At this instant the battery on shore began to play in earnest ; not in broadsides, but by single guns, as fast as they could pepper ; some of the shot coming through and through both sides of the polacre. We immediately hauled off for the opposite bank of the river, but took the ground on a bank, where the current, setting strong down, jammed us hard and fast. We were about two cables' length from the brig at this time, and the sun was now near setting. The firing continued, the flashes became brighter, the smoke began, as the sky darkened, to grow luminous, and presently the polacre appeared to be sinking. "She is settling fast down forward," said I ; "by St Patrick, she is sinking, sure enough,—there—there she goes ; what a list to port she is getting !" She slowly fell over on her beam-ends, in the mud, with every thing under water but about ten feet of the quarter bulwark next us, and the masts and rigging ; which the setting sun

was now gilding. The long shadows of the palms on the western bank now gradually crept across the whole breadth of the unwholesome stream, chasing the blood-red gleam of the sinking sun, first from the water, and then from the eastern bank, where it lingered for a moment, on the topmost branches of the trees, from which it also speedily disappeared, until the only objects that vouch'd for his being still above the horizon, were the wand-like tops of the polacre's tall masts, that shone like burnished brass rods for a brief moment; and then blackened under the fast falling darkness, which rapidly shrouded the whole melancholy scene; while creeping churchyard-looking vapours, as if the pestilence no longer walked in darkness, but had become palpable to the senses of sight, smell, and feeling, shrouded every object on the shores from our view, like a London fog. Myriads of musquitoes now began to attack us in every way, and several white cranes flitted past and around us, like ghosts, sailing slowly on their wide-spread wings; the chirping and croaking of numberless insects and reptiles came off strong from the banks, borne on the putrid exhalations that were like to poison us; the rushing of the river, that in the daytime we could scarcely hear, now sounded loud and hoarse, and rippled, lip, lipping against the stem as we lay aground, before circling away in dark frothy eddies in our wake.

We lay still for several hours without seeing any light, or hearing any noises on shore that indicated the vicinity of our dangerous neighbours. Once

tempted by the apparent quietude, the boat shoved off a stroke or two in the direction of the polacre, with the intention of setting fire to her, if possible ; but when within pistol-shot of their object, a loud voice from the shore sang out in a threatening tone —“ *Cuidado*,”* when the officer wisely pulled round, and returned to us.

We could hear the frigate in the offing through the livelong night, firing signal guns every ten minutes, which we durst not answer, without the certainty of being speedily blown to pieces by our invisible antagonists. About ten o'clock, I went along with little Binnacle, in one of the boats with muffled oars, and made directly for the bank opposite where he had been fired at ; on a nearer approach, I found it to be free of mangroves, and to consist of a black overhanging *scaur*, that had been scarped out by the rush of the stream, reflected across from the jutting point on the side where the slavers had intrenched themselves. All continued still, and here we skulked for a full hour, when we stole out, and pulled gently towards the wreck, the hull of which, either from a fresh in the river, or the rising of the tide, was now entirely under water. But we had not advanced above fifty yards towards our object, when the same unearthly “ *beware* ” swung booming along the water ; reflected in a small echo from the opposite side, as if a water fiend had been answered by a spirit of the air. We got back to the felucca, and now made up our minds to while away the time until the day broke, in the best

* Literally—Take care—mind your eye.

way we could. All hands being set to cooper the damaged boat, of which we contrived to make a very tolerable job, so that she leaked very little.

The lieutenant in command, Lanyard, and I, now went below, and immediately sent for the three midshipmen detached on the same service. We had some grog and a piece of rancid mess beef, and as turning in was out of the question, we planked it on the deck and lockers, and by the help of boat cloaks and blankets, were endeavouring to make ourselves as comfortable as we could, when the sound of a cannon-shot was once more heard.

"Why, what the deuce," said I, "we are making no movement—what can the fellows mean?"

There was no saying; they might, from the success they had met with in neutralizing the attempts of the boats to disturb them, or destroy the wreck, have overvalued the strength of their position, for this shot had been aimed at us; we had now plenty of water, so we instantly weighed, and dropped down the river out of range. All now remained quiet until the day dawned, and streaks of dull grey appeared in the eastern horizon. There was not a single warm tint in the sky, although we were in a regular vapour-bath of pestilential effluvia, and were any thing but cold. An hour before daylight the fog again sank down on us even thicker than before, so that every thing was hid from our view beyond ten paces' distance; but as it drew nearer sunrise, this watery canopy rose, and gradually evaporated in a dropping mist, until the gorgeous east once more reassumed its

glowing blush, and the stars sparkled brightly as the fast reddening firmament gave token that day was at hand. The sun rose—

“Midge, ahoy,” sang out a voice from the bow of a boat, that had on the instant stuck its snout round the point below us. Before we could answer, the yawl, full of enquiring messmates, was alongside.

“Hello, Master Sprawl—hello, Master Brail ; Lan-yard, my boy, what sort of an afternoon have you spent ?—Slept sound, eh ?—But why the devil did you keep blazing away and wasting his Majesty’s powder in minute guns in this way ; what *were* you after the whole night through ?” sung out old Pumpbolt, the master of the Gazelle.

“Come on board, my lad,” said Sprawl—“come on board, will ye, and you shall hear the whole story.”

They did so, and after a lengthier explanation than the reader would willingly listen to, it was determined, reinforced as we now were, that if we could make out the whereabouts of the fort that had so annoyed us, we should make a dash at it, even were we to have broken heads in prospect. As to attacking the battery in front, where there was no standing ground, it was utterly out of the question ; so, as the tide was now low ebb, and the slaver nearly high and dry on the bank, although, in the hole we had dropped into, the felucca was floating quietly out of cannon-shot, we left her in charge of ten hands, and crowding the other boats, three in all (the damaged boat having been repaired, as already mentioned), dropped

down with the current along shore, our whole force amounting to six-and-forty seamen and twenty marines ; and keeping a bright look-out for the smallest gap in the mangroves that could afford an entrance. At length we did arrive at such an opening ; it was a narrow creek, about thirty feet broad, overhung with the everlasting mangrove, which formed an arch overhead by the weaving of the thickly leaved branches together, utterly impervious to the sun's rays. I was in the sternmost boat ; the next to me was commanded by the first lieutenant of the frigate, old Davie Doublepipe ; and as we sculled along in the clear creek, for here it was translucent as a mountain lake, whatever the water might be in the river, our boats were touching, stem and stern. Sprawl, whose experience of the coast, and, still more, of expeditions of this kind, greatly surpassed my own, immediately asked me to shift from aft where I sat, forward to the bow of the boat ; the men continuing to pole along, as there was no room for them to ply their oars.

“ I say, Master Brail,” quoth he—as soon as we could communicate without being overheard—“ supposing we *do* carry his position—*cui bono*, what advantageth it us ? The slaves, which, when the Midge first saw the polacre, and chased him, were on board, are without question once more back into cover, and must all have been landed ; so if we could even weigh the hooker, and carry her to Cape Coast, I very much fear we should be unable to condemn her.”

“ But the honour and glory ? ” quoth old Dick.

" Both be—ahem," quoth he; " but if you think it an object to have a brush, why, come along, my hearties, it is all the day's work."

I was a younger man by ten years than our friend, and, boylike, gloried in the opportunity; so we again began to scull along the creek, sheltered by the same umbrageous screen of mangroves, now so luxuriant that it shut out both sun and light as if it had been a continuous artificial arbour. I cannot describe the beauty and coolness of this shade—water clear and pell-mellic as crystal under foot; a long distinct view through forests of naked mangrove stems on each side, while aloft there was a perfect web of verdure resting on the trelliswork formed by the interlacing of their bows, which spread out in a delicious covering over the whole creek. We dislodged innumerable birds of every variety, from the tall floating ghostlike crane to the chattering paroquet; and more than one owl flitted away from us, and flew up through the branches, until the sun struck him, when, with a *flaff* and a rustling *brush* through the topmost leaves, he came down overhead like a shot; until, restored by the green twilight, he would recover himself, and once more sail away along the narrow creek, and disappear round the corner of it ahead of us. In one instance, a boy in the bow struck one down with a boat-hook, so that the bird fell against Lieutenant Sprawl's head as he sat in the stern-sheets of the boat ahead.

" Hillo, Brail, my man," quoth he, " where away —what *are* you after?"

This narrow canal was absolutely alive with fish—

they surrounded us on all sides ; and although we could discern some dark suspicious-looking figures at the bottom, which we conjectured to be alligators ; still there was no perceptible motion amongst them, and we continued to pull quietly until the head-most boat took the ground for a moment, and the others closed upon her.

“ What is that ? ” sung out old Bloody Politeful.

“ Lord only knows,” answered the midshipman beside him, as a loud snorting noise, approaching to a roar, a sound that hovered between the blowing of a whale and the bellowing of a bull half choked in a marsh, echoed along the green arch.

“ Now, what customer can that be ? ” quoth your humble servant.

“ A hippopotamus,” said one of the launch’s crew ; and before we could hear any thing more, an animal, with a coarse black leather skin, and a most formidable head, about the size of a small Highland cow (it must have been but a young one), floundered down the creek past us, stirring up the mud as thick as tar all round about—but we had other work in hand, so he escaped without a shot. We pulled on, and presently the mangroves settled down right across the narrow creek, twisting their snake-like branches together into an impervious net. Ahead, our course was thus most effectually stopped by this ligneous portcullis, but close to the obstacle a small muddy path branched off to the right, and we determined to follow it.

It appeared a good deal poached, as if from the passing of a number of people recently along it ; and we had not proceeded above twenty yards when we came upon a spare studding-sail boom, to which some heavy weight had been attached, for two slings were fastened round it, showing, by the straight and wire-like appearance of the rope, how severe the strain had been ; the spar itself was broken in the midst, as if the weight attached to it had been more than it could bear.

“ Aha,” thought I, “ we are getting near the earth of the fox any how—the scent is high.”

We carried on. The path became more and more cut up, but no other evidences of our being on the proper trail occurred ; and as we could not fall in with a tree tall enough to afford us a glimpse of the lay of the land about us, had we ascended it, we had no alternative but to stand on.

“ No chance of doing any good here,” grumbled an old quartermaster, close to where I was struggling nearly knee-deep in mud. “ We shall catch nothing but fever here.”

“ Hillo ! ” said a little middy, as we braced up sharp round a right-angled corner of the pestiferous path—“ hillo, the road stops here ;” and so it certainly appeared to do about pistol-shot, or nearer, ahead of us, where a mound of fresh cut prickly bushes was heaped up about six feet high right across the path. Whether this was a casual interruption thrown up by the natives, or an impediment cast in our way by our concealed *amigos*, I could not tell. A

loud barking of dogs was now heard ahead of us—presently a halt was called, and the word was passed along to see that the priming of the muskets was dry and sound ; and all of us instinctively drew his cutlass a finger's breadth or so from its sheath, to see that it would come readily to one's hand, should need be. The first lieutenant, who, disdaining the common ship cutlass, had buckled on a most enormous Andrea Ferrara with a huge rusty basket-hilt, advanced boldly towards the enclosure, when a smooth-faced, very handsome dark young man suddenly raised his head above the green defence—“ *Que quieren ustedes, amigos mios?* ”

“ What's that to you ? ” rejoined Sprawl ; “ give us a clear road, my darling, or maybe we shall cooper you, after a very comical fashion.”

We had scarcely uttered the words when a discharge of grape burst from the green mound, crashing amongst the branches, and sending them down in a shower on our heads ; while all the neighbouring trees, like Jacob's wands, became, in the twinkling of an eye, patched with white spots, from the rasping of the shot.

“ Forward ! ” shouted Davie Doublepipe—“ follow me, men ! ” when—rattle—a platoon of musketry was fired at us. The grape had missed, from a wrong elevation of the gun ; not so the small arms—one of our party was shot dead and three wounded ; but the spring was nevertheless made. We scrambled across the brushwood that had been heaped on the road, and to the top of the stockade, about six feet high, that it

masked, and presently found ourselves in the presence of thirty determined fellows, who were working like fiends in the endeavour to slew round seven eighteen-pound carronades, that had been mounted on a stage of loose planks, and pointed towards the river. Apparently they had been unable to accomplish this with more than one, the gun that had just been fired, which in the recoil had slid off the platform, and was now useless, from sinking in the semisolid black soil, two of the others having already, in the attempt to train them round on us, capsized and sunk right out of sight in it. So aid from the cannon they now had none; but never did men show a more daring front —as they stood their ground, exchanging blow for blow most manfully.

The fort, or battery, was a stockaded enclosure, about fifty yards square. Towards the river face, before we attempted to turn it, the guns had been mounted on a stage of loose planks, a most unstable foundation, from resting on running mud. The brushwood between them and the river grew thick and close, and opposite the muzzle of each cannon the leaves were scorched and blackened. The wooden platform extended about twelve feet in breadth landward, but beyond it the whole inside of the fort was soft black mud, through which, on the side farthest from the river, protruded the stumps of the haggled brushwood, where it had been cleared by the hatchet; while branches were thickly strewed on the surface nearer the guns, to afford a footing across it. These branches, however, had been removed for a space of

ten feet, at the spot we boarded at, where the slimy ground appeared poached into a soft paste, so that no footing might be afforded to an attacking force.

The desperadoes already mentioned, were all armed with boarding pikes, or cutlasses, while several had large brass bell-mouthed *trabucos*, or blunderbusses, which threw five or six musket-balls at a discharge. Most of them were naked to their trowsers, and they all wore a blue, yellow, or red sash, drawn tight round the waist, through which several had pistols stuck; while their heads were covered, in general, by a blue or red cloth cap, like a long stocking, to the end of which was fastened a thick silk or woollen tassel, either hanging down the back, or falling over the side of the head. Some wore shirts of a striped woollen stuff, common amongst the Biscayan boatmen. One elderly man, a large athletic Hercules of a fellow, bareheaded, and very bald; with his trowsers rolled up to his knees, displaying his dark brawny legs and naked feet, dressed in one of the aforesaid striped shirts, and wearing a broad-brimmed, narrow conical-crowned hat, with a flaming red riband tied round it close to the spreading brim, stood in advance of the others, with a *trabuco* in his hand, the piece held in a way that it might be instantly levelled at us.

These ferocious-looking rascals had most formidable auxiliaries, in three Spanish blood-hounds, as yet held in leather-leashes; but who were jumping

and struggling, open-mouthed, and barking, and panting to get at us, until they were almost strangled ; their eyes straining in their heads, or rather starting from their sockets, as they champed and dashed the foam right and left from their coal-black muzzles. They were indeed superb creatures, all three of a bright bay colour, and about the height of a tall English stag-hound ; but much stronger, as if there had been a cross of the bull-dog in their blood. The moment Lieutenant Sprawl stuck his very remarkable snout over the stockade, several of us having scrambled up abreast of him, the man already mentioned as apparently the leader of the party hailed—

“ *Que quieren ustedes—somos Españoles—y unde esta la guerra entre ustedes i nosotros.*”

He was answered by a volley from all our pieces, and simultaneously, in the struggle to get over, half-a-dozen of us tumbled down, right into the soft mud ; those who had the luck to fall on their feet sank to their knees in an instant, whilst several who fell head foremost, left a beautiful cast of their phrenological developements in the mire. We fought with all our might, you may imagine, to extricate ourselves, but two out of the group were instantly pinned in their clay moulds, by the boarding-pikes of the slaver’s crew, and died miserably where they fell, while several others were wounded by shot ; but more of our fellows continued to pour in after us, and there we soon were, thirty men at the fewest, struggling and shouting, and blazing away, using the dead bodies of our

fallen comrades as stepping-stones to advance over; while about fifteen more, as a reserve under little Binnacle, had perched themselves on the top of the stockade in our rear, and kept pouring in a most destructive fire over our heads. The yells of the men, and the barking and worrying of the dogs, who had now been let loose, and who were indiscriminately attacking whoever was next them, were appalling in the highest degree.

The bipeds who so manfully opposed us, it was our duty and our glory to encounter; but the dogs were the very devil,—altogether out of our reckoning. It was curious to see those who feared not the face of man, hanging back, and looking behind them to see if the coast was clear for a bolt, when attacked by one of the bloodhounds. So our antagonists, although so largely overmatched in numbers, had, from the ferocity of their allies, and the soundness of their footing, the advantage over us, and made good their position on the wooden stage, notwithstanding all our attempts to dislodge them; and they were in the act of getting another of the carronades, no doubt loaded with grape, slewed round and pointed at us, when five marines, who had scrambled through the brake, took them in flank, and attacked them from the sea face, with unexampled fury. The serjeant of the party instantly shot the leader of the Spanish crew in the back, between the shoulders, when he made a staggering rush, and to my utter consternation bore me to the ground, and then fell forward right on the top

of me. Oh for the mahogany desk jammed into the pit of my stomach, thought I; all your accounts are closed, Master Benjie. Still in my dreams I often fancy that I feel the convulsive clutches of the dying man, and the hot blood gurgling from his mouth, down my neck, and the choking gasp, and the death quiver.

I was not stunned however, although I must have been overlaid some time, for when I wriggled myself clear of the horrible load, our fellows had already gained the platform, led by old Davie Doublepipe, who was laying about him with his rusty weapon like a Paladin of old; at one moment shredding away showers of twigs from the branches that overhung us; at another inflicting deep and deadly gashes on his antagonists; his sword raining blood, as he whirled it round his head flashing like lightning; while his loud growl, like the roaring of the surf after a gale, alternated rapidly with his *tootletoo*, that gushed shrill and sharp from out the infernal noise and smoke and blaze of the tumult. The Gazelles and Midges had now closed hand to hand with their antagonists, and the next minute the survivors of the latter fairly turned tail, and fled along a narrow path, equally muddy as the one we had entered by; where many of them stuck up to the knees, and were there shot down by our people, but no attempt was made to follow them. Several men had been terribly torn by the bloodhounds, who, when their masters had fled, noble brutes as they were, stood gasping and barking;

and *hanching* at us, at the entrance of the opening, thus covering their retreat ;—spouting out in a bound or two towards us every now and then, and immediately retiring, and yelling and barking at the top of their pipes. I was going to fire at one of them, when the Scotch corporal of marines, already introduced on the scene, took the liberty of putting in his oar. “ Beg pardon, Mr Brail, but let abee for let abee with mad dogs and daft folk, is an auld but a very true adage.” I looked with an enquiring eye at the poor fellow, who appeared worn to the bone with illness, so that I was puzzled to understand how Sprawl had brought him with him ; but I took his hint, and presently the canine rear-guard beat a retreat, and all was quiet for a time.

We now spiked the cannon and capsized them into the mud, where they instantly sank, and I had time to look around on the scene of conflict. There lay two of our people stark and stiff, countersunk into the soft soil, which was gradually settling over the bodies in a bloody mire ; while four wounded men were struggling to extricate themselves, and endeavouring to attain the hard footing of the platform of planks. Three of them, with the assistance of their mess-mates, did accomplish this, but the fourth was too badly hurt, and too faint from the loss of blood, to persevere, and in despair threw himself back, gasping on the bloody quagmire.

“ What is that ? ” said I, while half a dozen dropping shots sparkled out from beneath the thick jungle,

and at the very instant one of the boat-keepers stuck his head over the stockade.

“ The tide has left us, sir, and the mouth of the creek has not six inches of water in it, sir. The boats must stick hard and fast until next flood.”

Startling enough this. What was to be done? To retreat, for the time, was out of the question, so we had no chance but in a forward demonstration.

“ After these miscreants, men,” cried old Sprawl, having previously ordered ten hands back to cover the boats—“ after them, and drive them from the jungle.”

“ Hurrah !” We shoved along the narrow path through which the enemy had vanished, and the first we overtook was a poor devil shot through the neck, writhing in agony, and endeavouring to extricate himself from the slough. He was thrust through on the instant, as unceremoniously as if he had been a crushed beetle. A little farther on we encountered in another small by-track that took away to the left, three others, evidently part of the gang who had been peppering us from beneath the covert of the bushes. These were shot down as unceremoniously where they stood. I cannot forget the imploring glances of the poor fellows as they vainly beseeched our mercy, and the fearful sight of their stretching themselves out, and falling crash back amongst the branches when we fired. Two of them seemed to fall at once quite dead amongst the bloody leaves ; but the third, shrieking aloud, had wrestled himself a fathom

or two into the brake before he received his quietus from a marine, who walked close up to him, and shot him deliberately through the heart. Still we heard the shouts of the rest of the party who had retreated, and were now well ahead of us, and we pushed on in pursuit—when all at once, as if I had been struck by the levin-brand, a flash of light blazed across my eyes, and I came to the ground by the run.

CHAPTER III.

THE MIDGE IN THE HORNET'S NEST.

WHEN I came to myself I was sitting in the small muddy path through which our antagonists had been driven. About a fathom from me, partly hid by the mangrove bushes, lay the dead body of one of the white crew of the polacre. He had fallen on his back across a stout branch, that shot out horizontally from one of the trees at a height of about a foot from the ground, so that, while his feet and legs rested on the soft black alluvial soil on one side of it, his head, with the face turned upwards, and relaxed arms, hung down on the other. He was dressed in the striped shirt already mentioned, largely open at the breast, and wide white petticoat trowsers, that reached to the knee, made of some strong cotton stuff of the same fabric as the India salampore, so that the garment looked like a Greek kilt. It was fastened at the waist by a red silk sash, one end of which hung down over the branch across which he lay, apparently saturated and heavy with black blood, that gave it the appearance of a large purple tassel. His collapsed loins, where he was doubled over the branch, looked as thin and attenuated as if he had been shot in two,

and his prominent chest and lower extremities merely connected by his clothing. His feet and legs, as well as his arms, were bare—his shirt-sleeves extending only three inches below his shoulder ; and it was a fearful sight to look on the death-blue colour of the muscles, which no longer stood out in well-defined and high relief, but had fallen and assumed the rounded appearance of a woman's limbs. The crown of his head touched the ground, resting on his long black hair, that had been worn turned up into a knot, but was now spread out in a rich tress, a foot beyond him. He had ear-rings in his ears, and a broad gold crucifix tied round his neck by a cord of spun hair—Alas for her whose raven locks composed the strands of it ! His mouth was open, but his eyes were closed as if he slept ; and a small coal black tuft of hair on his chin, under his nether lip, startled one, from its conspicuousness in contrast with the deathly pallor of his face. He was a very handsome youth, yet the features inverted, as his head hung down, assumed from this circumstance an expression so unusual, yet so soft and so touchingly melancholy, that although I had often looked on death before, even in my own miserable plight I could not help noticing it, and being moved by it. There was no wound that I could see, but thick black gouts were slowly trickling from the white fresh splintered end of the branch that had been split off in the rush, across which he lay ; but this was only noticeable at the splinter-mark, the sluggish stream being invisible, while it crept from his body along the dark green bark of the limb of the

mangrove-tree. A small pyramid had already been formed on the ground, directly below the end of the branch, by the dropping of the coagulating blood. The whole scene was pervaded by the faint mysterious light of the subdued sunbeams, as they struggled through the screen of motionless leaves above ; while the dead corse slept in the deep cold shadow below, that to the eye of one suddenly withdrawn from the glare of the tropical noontide, appeared to approach absolute darkness ; still a soft green ray, or *pensil*, like moonlight piercing the thick woven foliage of a summer arbour, fell on and floated over the face and one of the naked arms, until the still features appeared to become radiant of themselves—as if they had been blanched by it into the self-luminous whiteness of fresh hewn alabaster.

It was in truth a most piteous sight, and as the image of my aged parent rose up, in my extremity, before my mind's eye at the moment, I held up my feeble hands to heaven, and prayed fervently unto the Almighty to bless her declining years ; and, if that my race were indeed run, and now in very truth my place was to know me no more, that my sins might, for Christ's sake, be forgiven me. "Alas, alas !" thought I, bowed down by intense suffering to the very dust, "may he too not have had a mother?"

For a minute, as I slowly recovered from the stunning effects of the shot, I sat observing all this, and pressing the torn skin of my forehead to my temples with one hand, whilst with the other I kept clearing away the blood as it flowed into my eyes ; but by the

time I had perfectly recovered my recollection, my sympathy vanished, all my thoughts became absorbed, and my energies, small as they were at the time, excited in almost a supernatural degree by the actual approach of a hideous, and, in my helpless condition, probably the most appalling danger that a human being could be threatened with.

For a second or two I had noticed that the branch across which the dead Spaniard lay, was slightly moved now and then, and that some object was advancing from beneath it, out of the thicket beyond. I was not long left in doubt, for one of the noble blood-hounds now dragged himself into the light, and wriggled from amongst the mangroves to within a fathom of me. At first when he struggled from beneath his master's body, he began to lick his face and hands, and then threw his head back with a loud whine, as if disappointed in his expectation of some acknowledgment. Alas! none came; and after another vain attempt, pain seemed to drive the creature furious, for he seized the arm next me, that he had been licking the minute before, by the wrist, making the dead bones crackle between his teeth in his agony. All at once he began to yell and bark, and at intervals turned his fierce eyes on me, then swung his head violently back, and again howled most piteously.

All this time I could hear the loud shouting of our people in the distance, and a scattering shot now and then, but the work nearer home was more than sufficient to occupy me; for the dog, after another mo-

ment of comparative repose, suddenly raised himself on his fore-paws; for the first time I could see that he had been shot through the spine, near the flank, so that his two hind-legs were utterly powerless, and trailing on the ground.

He scrambled on a foot or two nearer—again all was still, and he lay quiet with his nose resting on the ground, as if he had been watching his prey; but pain appeared suddenly to overcome him again, as, stretching out his fore-paws straight before him, and throwing his head back, he set up the most infernal howl that ear ever tingled to. “Merciful powers! can he mean to attack me?” thought I, as the fierce creature left the dead body, and reared himself on his fore-legs, with open mouth, and tongue hanging out, uttering the most fearful cries, between a fierce bark and a howl, and again attempting to drag himself towards me. I made a desperate effort to rise, but could not; and in the prospect of so dreadful a death, I shouted for aid, as loud as my feebleness would let me. Once more suffering seemed to overcome the creature’s ferocity, and he stopped and yelled again.

Although I was still in some degree bewildered, and almost blinded from the blood that continued to flow down my forehead, and the flap of skin that covered my left eye, so as effectually to seal it, acting as a deadlight as it were, still, for dear life, I grasped my cutlass—alas, the blade was broken short off by the hilt! My left hand then mechanically clutched my belt where my pistol hung—“Ah, *it* is there, any how.” I instantly changed the broken blade into my

other hand, and with the coolness of despair cocked the pistol in my right, and lay still, awaiting the approach of my fierce antagonist, under the tremendous persuasion that my fate was inevitable if I missed him. As I looked in breathless dread, he suddenly gave a scrambling wallop towards me—"I am done for—God have mercy on me, and receive my soul!" Another scramble. I felt his hissing hot breath; and the foam that he champed from his fangs, as he tossed his head from side to side in a paroxysm of rage and pain, fell like flakes of hot sulphur over my face. "Now is the time!" I thrust the pistol into his mouth, and pulled the trigger. Almighty powers! it flashed in the pan! With my remaining strength I endeavoured to thrust it down his throat, as he coughed up blood and froth into my face; he shook his head, clutched the weapon in his teeth, and then threw it from him, as if in disappointment that it had not been part and portion of his enemy; and again made a snap at my shoulder. I struck at him with my broken cutlass—he seemed not to feel the blow—and throwing myself back as far as I could, I shrieked in my extremity to that God whom I had so often slighted and forgotten, for mercy to my miserable soul. Crack—a bullet whizzed past me. The dog gave a long, loud howl, gradually sinking into a low murmur as his feet slid from under him, and his head lay open-jawed on the mud—a quivering kick of his feet—and he was dead—as I nearly was through fear.

"Hello," quoth old Clinker, the master-at-arms, one of those who had come up from the boats, "who

is this fighting with beasts at Ephesus, eh?" The moment he recognised me, the poor fellow made his apology, although, Heaven knows, none was required.

"Beg pardon, sir; I little thought it was you, Mr Brail, who was so near being worried by that vile beast."

I breathed again. The bullet that had so nearly proved my quietus at the commencement of the action, had struck me on the right temple, and, glancing, had ran along my whole forehead, ploughing up the skin, until it reached the left eye, where it detached a large flap, that, as already mentioned, hung down by a tag over my larboard daylight; fairly blinding me on that side.

"Here, Quinton, and Mornington," said Clinker, to two of the people, who followed him, "here, lend a hand to bring Mr Brail along, will ye?" They raised me on my legs, and gave me a mouthful of grog from a canteen, and we proceeded, following the voices of our shipmates. Comforted by the cordial, I found my strength return in some measure; and when I was once satisfied that no bones were broken, that I was in fact only and simply *kilt*, my spirits revived, and before we overtook our allies, having bathed my wound with rum, and bound it with my handkerchief, I was able to walk without support, and in a certain degree to take care of myself.

The path continued for about half a mile farther, and in all that route we no longer heard or saw any indications of our comrades. "Why, there is no use in all this," said old Clinker; "they must have taken

another direction, so we had better return, and wait the young flood to enable us to back out of the scrape."

I considered this the wisest advice that could be given, and right-about-face was the word, when a scapegrace of a marine, who had straggled from the main body, suddenly came running at the top of his speed from the advance, and sung out,—“Lord, sir and messmates, come here, come here !”

“Why, what do you see ?” responded Clinker.

“Why, sir, here is the queerest sight I ever see'd in all my born days.”

“What is it, man? body o' me, what is it ?” exclaimed the old quarter-master, as we bowled along, following the Jolly; the fellow gave no answer, but skipped on before us like a dancing-master. Presently we arrived at an open space, situated at the head of the tortuous mangrove-fringed creek that we had landed in. The channel of it was dry, all above the crook, about fifty yards from us, where it bent towards the east, and full of black slimy mud, over-arched entirely by the snake-like roots and branches of the mangroves ; whose upper branches, as usual, supported a thick mat of green leaves, while all below was bare naked convolutions of green weather-stained stems and branches. The muddy canal seemed to end at this spot, under the dark shade of the bushes. Imbedded in its obscene channel, and hauled close up to the head of the creek, lay a large Eboe canoe, about fifty feet long ; the bottom hollowed out of one single tree, but there was a washstreak of some kind of hardwood plank, so as to raise the gunwale about

a foot above the ledge of the original vessel. The two bamboo masts were unshipped, and stowed amidships on the thwarts, and above twenty paddles were ranged uprightly, with the blades resting on the bottom, on each side of the masts.

There was a heavy log of unhewn wood, about thirty feet long, laid across the head of the creek, where it terminated ; on which three grey parrots were clawing up and down, fastened by the legs with pieces of twine.

Immediately adjoining was an open area of about fifty yards in diameter—the soil appearing to have been mixed with white ashes, and then baked, or rammed down into a hard floor. This open space was closed in by a thick forest of cashaw-trees on the land side, through which several paths opened ; while on every other, except at the head of the creek, it was surrounded by mangrove jungle. In the centre stood a native house, a long, low, one-story, mud building, about forty feet in length, by fifteen wide, thatched with the leaves of the dwarf palm. It had one large aperture in the roof amidships, raised a foot or two by piled turf, from which curled up a thick blue smoke ; but there was no opening on the side we approached it by, beyond a low door, not above three feet high ; indeed, the eaves of the house itself were scarcely four feet from the ground.

Right in front of us, and precisely opposite the door, ensconced in a curious nondescript chair of wickerwork, sat, very drunk apparently, and more than half asleep, a ponderous middle-aged negro, dressed in

a most primitive fashion ; his sole article of clothing being a common woollen blanket, with a hole cut in the middle for his head to pass through, while the sides were fastened together with wooden skewers, which effectually confined his arms ; so that there he was, all blanket and head, and sound asleep, or pretending to be so, although the sun shone down into the cleared space with a fierceness that would have broiled the brains of any other man, had they been covered by a common skull. We were all speedily congregated round this beauty ; there was no one in attendance on him, and we had no means of judging of his quality.

“ I say, my good man,” quoth Lieutenant Sprawl, “ pray, did you see any white men—Spaniards—pass this way ? ”

The sleeper appeared slowly to recover his faculties ; he first stared at the interrogator, then at old Dick Lanyard and me, and then at our people. He wished to seem, or really was, overcome with surprise. Presently—the first lieutenant having for a moment left him, to look around and reconnoitre the lay of the land—a little reefer, Joe Peake by name, stole up to him, and whether or no the aforesaid mid had taken a small pull at his canteen, I cannot tell, but he rattled out in the ear of the torpid savage, “ I say, my sleeping beauty, if you don’t tell us in a twinkling whereabouts these Spanish raggamuffins are stowed away, by Saint Patrick, but I will make free to waken you with the point of this cutlass here, and in a way by no means ceremonious at all, at all ; ”

and suiting the action to the word, he gave the sable Morpheus a very sufficing progue with the point of his weapon, about the region of the midriff, which instantaneously extracted a yell, worthy of any Bengal tiger that I had ever tumbled up to see. Presently the howling subsided into articulate sounds, but not one of the party could make any thing ship-shape out of the barbarous exclamations.

"Now, my darlin'," continued wee middy, "try toder tack, dear;" and he again excited the savage's corporeals, after a very sharp fashion, with the same instrument, and the howl was louder than before.

"Now, may the devil fly away with me," quoth the imp, waxing wroth, "but I will blow your brains out, you drunken thief of the world, if you don't give me a legitimate reply—spake, you ill-bred spaldeen, you—Answer me in English, you scoundrel;" whereupon, to our very great surprise indeed, out spoke our sable acquaintance.

"Hello, where de debil is I—who you, eh? What you wantee here? I hab no slave to give you. De Caridad, him do get every one I get. So, good men, go to hell all of you—do—very mosh go to hell—do."

The barbarian again fell back on his seat, either asleep, or feigning to be so, and began to snore like a rhinoceros. By this time Davie Doublepipe's attention was attracted to a noise within the house. "Now, Master Blueskin," said he, "have the kindness to open the door there;" then, as if suddenly recollecting himself, in a voice of thunder he exclaimed—

"Surround the house, men. Shoot any one who tries to escape."

This seemed to arouse our sluggish friend, who immediately got up, and staggered a few paces towards the margin of the wood, where a most remarkable object met our eyes. It was a fetish hut or temple, composed of a shed about ten feet square, raised on four bamboos. From the eaves or thatch of the roof, to the ground, might have measured ten feet; and three feet below the roof there was a platform rigged, on which sat the most unearthly and hideous production of the hand of man that I had ever witnessed. It was a round, pot-bellied, wooden figure, about three feet high, with an enormous head, a mouth from ear to ear, and little, diminutive, spindly legs and arms. A human skull, with the brain scooped out, but the red scalp, and part of the hair, and the flesh of the face adhering to it, while the lower jaw had been torn away, was hung round this horrible-looking image's neck. Immediately beneath there was a heap of white smouldering cinders, as if the embers of a large fire had been swept together, with three or four white bones protruding from the fissures in the cake of white ashes; which, from their peculiar shape and extraordinary whiteness, gave me some shuddering qualms as to the kind of living creature they had belonged to. The whole space round the heap, under the platform on which the Fetish stood, as well as the posts of the rude and horrible temple itself, was sprinkled with fresh black spots like newly dried blood.—I doubted exceedingly

whether the same had ever circulated through the hearts of bulls or goats.

"Now, my good man, bestir you, and let us into the house," said I, by this time renovated by another small pull at a marine's canteen.

The surly savage, who, in his attempt to escape, had fallen headlong, and had all this while lain as motionless as a coiled-up hedgehog, now slowly opened his eyes, and peered at me with a sort of drunken gravity—but he did not speak. I took the cutlass from the midshipman—"Now, my man, if you don't speak, it is spitting you on this same that I will be after ;" and accordingly, to corroborate my word, I made a most furious demonstration with the naked weapon, when he sung out, in great terror, "Stop, massa, me is Sergeant Quacco of de—West India, and not a savage nigr natural to dis dam country. Long live Kin Shorge, massa!"

"Why," said Lieutenant Sprawl, "how came you here, my beauty?—tell us that."

"Surely," quoth blackie; "no objection in de wide world, but"—

Here our people had forced the door of the long shed, on the opposite side from where we were, and we could hear from their shouts that they were now in the interior of the house. This entirely discomposed our new friend, and seemed to sober him all on a sudden, if, indeed, the appearance of inebriety had not been from the first assumed for the occasion. "Ah, dere—all is known—all known. Call off your people, gentlemen—call off your people. Oh, what is dat?"

Here several pistol-shots were fired in the house, and the clink of steel was heard, and loud shouting, in Spanish as well as English.

"Who are in the shed?" Lanyard called out,—
"Who are concealed there?"

"How de debil can I tell?" said the man—"How de debil can I say?"—and he started from his chair, where he had again bestowed himself, and made a bolt, with intent to escape.—I tripped up his heels.

"Now, you scoundrel," said I, as the fellow lay sprawling on the ground—"confess who are concealed there, or I will run you through where you lie."

"I will confess," shrieked he—"I will confess—de crew of dat dam polacre is dere, and her cargo of one hundred fifty slave, is dere—so sink, burn, and destroy dem all, if dat will pleasure massa; but don't cut my troat please, massa—don't, I beg you, cut my troat—God bless you, massa—Oh—oh—no cut my troat, please, good massa?"

My attention was here attracted by what was going on elsewhere. Leaving the vagabond where he sat, I turned a step or two towards the long barn-like building.

The noise in the interior continued. "Hello," sung out the first lieutenant—"Hello, men, what *are* you after? Haul off—come out, will ye—come out;" and he began to thunder at the low door, with his pillar-like trams, each of which might have made a very passable battering-ram.

The uproar increased. "Zounds!" said he, "the fellows are mad;" and he started off round the north-

ernmost end of the shed, finding that all attempts to force the door on the side next us proved futile. Presently the topman, and two marines, who had remained beside the negro, also bolted to "see the fun on the other side of the house," and left me alone with the savage.

It was now "the uproar, with variations," as old Bloody Politeful's two voices swelled the row. I looked at the negro, and weak and worn-out as I was, I began to feel rather comical. "Can I manage him, in case he shows fight?" thought I. He seemed to be taking the same measure himself; for by this time he had gathered himself up, and advancing a stride or two from his seat or bench, he appeared to balance himself, and weigh his gigantic proportions against my comparatively tiny thews and sinews. All at once, like a tiger about to make his spring, he drew suddenly back, and crouched; evidently concentrating all his energies. Time to make a demonstration, thought I; and thereupon drew a pistol from my belt, and opening the pan, slapped it with my right hand, to see that the priming was all right, and in immediate communication with the charge in the barrel. He looked rapidly, but keenly, all round, and then at me. I grasped the weapon firmly in my right hand. He rose—upset the bench on which he sat, in a twinkling screwed out a leg of it, and was in the very act of making a blow at me, when the shouts and yells in the long shed increased to an infernal degree of vivacity, and a hot sharp crackling, and a thick stifling smoke, that burst in white wreaths from the

corners of the building, arrested his uplifted arm. " You infamous renegade, if you don't lay down the leg of that stool, I will, on the credit of a Kilkenny man, by the mother's side, send a bullet through your breadbasket—If I don't, never fear me."

He had now made up his mind, and advancing, nothing daunted, made a spring and a blow at my head, which, if I had not dodged, would have sent me to answer for many a sin unrepented of; as it was, it descended with great force on my left shoulder, but on the instant I shot him through the muscle of his uplifted arm, and down he tumbled, roaring like the very devil. I had started up the instant I pulled the trigger. The door of the long building, at that very instant of time, gave way, and out rushed five white men—evidently part of the crew of the polacre brig—followed by our people. Weak as I was, I stood up to the headmost; and this appeared to have quelled him, for he instantly threw down his arms. The crackling of the fire continued; bursts of smoke spouted from the roof; presently they were intermingled with bright sparks, and the yells arose even louder, if possible, than before, from the inside; when out rushed our people, headed by the redoubtable Davie Doublepipe himself.

" Hillo, Brail," said he, " you seem to have your own share of it to-day: why, what *has* come over you?—who has wounded you?"

" That black rascal there."

" The devil!" quoth Lanyard; " shall we immolate the savage where he lies?"

"No, no—attend to what is going on in the other end of the house—for Godsake mind what may befall there!"

With the gallant fellow it was a word and a blow—"Here,—here—try back, my fine fellows, try back."

The yells increased. "Merciful Providence!" exclaimed Mr Sprawl, as he saw his people recoil from the heat and flame, "what is to be done? These poor creatures will be roasted alive where they are made fast." Our party turned; made as if they would have re-entered the house, but the scorching fire kept them back. The cries were now mixed with low moans and suffocating coughs, and presently a string of miserable naked savages appeared streaming out of the door, as fast as they could run, as if flying from instant death—men, old and young, well-grown children of both sexes, and several elderly women—the ancients staggering along after the more nimble as fast as their feebler strength would admit. They rushed forth, all as fast as they could, never halting, until they had landed up to the waist in the muddy creek, and an interval of half a minute elapsed, when several of the women made signs that there were still some of the miserable creatures within; and, indeed, this was but too sadly vouched for, by the shrill and heartrending cries that continued to issue from the burning shed, as if women and children had been confined in some part of it, and unable to escape. Old Bloody Politeful was at this time standing in the middle of the open space, with the four middies, Pumpbolt, and about ten men grouped around him;

the rest being employed in various ways—some in an unavailing attempt to extinguish the fire—the others in guarding the prisoners, when all at once the first lieutenant sung out—“ Men, there are women and children burning there—follow me.” He spoke to British seamen—could he have said more ? And away they rushed after their heroic leader, stumbling over each other in their anxiety to succour the poor helpless beings within. A minute of most intense suspense followed, when upwards of a dozen women rushed out from the flaming hut, sheltering, with their bent bodies and naked arms, their helpless infants from the sparks, and fire, and falling timbers ; and even after they had escaped, and had couched at our feet, the cries and groans from amongst the burning mass too fearfully evinced that numbers of our fellow-creatures, in all likelihood the most helpless of the party, were still in jeopardy, nay, in very truth, were at that instant giving up the ghost. Our crew did all they could to get the remainder of the poor creatures out, but many perished in the flames.

About fifty human beings, chiefly women, were saved, and placed, huddled together, in the centre of the open space ; presently several of the white Spaniards, who had held on in the shed amidst flame and smoke, that I thought more than sufficient to have suffocated any man of woman born, started off into the woods, and disappeared, all to the five whom we had seized, and who were placed beside, and secured along with the captive blacks. Those we had

taken were surly, fierce-looking bravoes ; who, when asked any questions as to the name and character of their vessel, only smiled savagely, as much as to say —“ *Our* vessel ! where is she *now* ? You are none the better for *her* at all events !”

“ Brail, my dear,” said Lieutenant Sprawl, “ since you stand pilot, what is to be done ? Had we not better be off with our white prisoners while the play is good ?”

“ If the tide will let us,” said I ; “ but the boats as yet are high and dry in the creek, and we have lost the only opportunity that offered for burning the polacre ; had we confined ourselves to that object, and kept the boats afloat, we might have accomplished it where she lies at low water.”

“ Better as it is,” rejoined Sprawl—“ better as it is ; we found no slaves on board, and might have got into a scrape had we set fire to her in cold blood.—No, no ! let us be off, and try and launch the boats. Here, men, secure your prisoners ; shall we carry the black Broker—this respectable resetter of human beings—with us, Brail—eh ?”

“ Why, we had better,” said I ; “ we may get some information out of the vagabond ; so kick him up, Moses ;”—he was at this moment lying on his back, again shamming a trance—“ up with him, pique him with your boarding pike, my man.”

The seaman I had addressed did as he was desired ; but the fellow was now either dead-drunk, or had sufficient nerve to control any expression of pain, for the deuced hard thumps and sharp proques he re-

ceived, produced no apparent effect. He lay like a log through them all; even the pain of the wound in his arm seemed insufficient to keep him awake.

"Why, what is that—do you hear that?" said Lanyard, in great alarm; for several dropping shots now rattled in the direction of the boats. All was still for a minute, and every ear was turned to catch the sound, during which time we distinctly heard in the distance a loud voice hail,—

"Come out from beneath the bushes there, you villains, or we shall fire a volley."

Again there was a long pause—a horn was sounded—then another—then a wild confused yell, mingled with which the musketry again breezed up, and we could hear, from the shouts of our people, that the covering party at the boats had been assailed. When the first shot was fired, the black resetter lifted his head, anxiously, as if to listen; but seeing my eyes were fixed on him, he instantly dropped it again. But the instant he heard the negro horns, the noise of their onset, and the renewal of the firing, he started to his legs, as active as a lynx; and before any of us could gather our senses about us, he was on the verge of the wood; when all at once a thought seemed to come across him; he stopped, and hung in the wind for a moment, as if irresolute whether to bolt or turn back. At this moment one of our people let drive at him, but missed him, although the ball nipped off a dry branch close above his head. He instantly ran and laid hold of one of the pillars of the frame that supported the abominable little idol. An-

other shot was fired, when down tumbled his godship on the head of his worshipper, who caught the image by the legs, and seeing some of our people rushing to seize him, he let go his hold of the upright, and whirling the figure round, holding on by its legs, he let drive with it at the man nearest him, and dropped him like a shot. He then bolted out of sight, through one of the several muddy paths that opened into the mangrove thicket landward.

"No time to be lost, my lads," whistled old Davie; "keep together;" — then, in his thorough bass, "Don't throw away a shot; so now bring along your prisoners, and let us fall back on the boats— —that's it—march the Dons to the front—shove on, my fine fellows—shove on."

The firing at the boats had by this time slackened, but the cries increased, and were now rising higher and fiercer as we approached. We reached the fort, the place of our former conflict. Heavens! what a scene presented itself! It makes one's blood run cold to reflect on it, even after the lapse of years. On the platform lay two Spaniards, and close to them three of our crew, stark and stiff, and already stripped naked as the day they were born, by whom Heaven only knows; while half a dozen native dogs were tearing and *riving* the yet scarcely cold carcasses, and dragging the dead arms hither and thither, until our near approach frightened them away, with a loud unearthly scream, of no kindred to a common bark.

One fierce brute, with his forepaws planted, straight and stiff, before him, on a dead body, was tugging

with his front teeth at the large pectoral muscle ; occasionally letting go his hold to look at us, and utter a short angry bark, and again tearing at the bleeding flesh, as if it had been a carcass thrown to him for food. Another dog had lain down, with a hold of one of the same poor fellow's cold hands. Every now and then he would clap his head sideways on the ground, so as to get the back grinders to bear on his prey ; and there the creature was, with the dead blue fingers across his teeth, crunching and crunching, and gasping, with his mouth full of froth and blood, and marrow, and white splinters of the crushed bones, the sinews and nerves of the dead limb hanging like bloody cords and threads from——Bah !—you have given us a little *de trop* of this, Master Benjie.

Two wounded Spaniards were all this time struggling in the soft mud beyond the platform ; their lower limbs, and in fact their whole bodies up to the arm-pits, had already settled down into the loathsome chaos. Some of our people were soft-hearted enough to endeavour to extricate them, but, “Get along, get along—be off to the boats, will ye ? be off to the boats, if you wish to sleep in a sound skin,” shouted by Mr Sprawl, made all hands turn to the more engrossing affair of self-preservation.

But as it was some time before we could all string over the stockade, and the single plank that led to it from the platform across the mud, I could not help remarking one of the poor fellows who appeared to have been badly wounded, for there was blood on his ghastly visage. His struggles had gradually

settled him up to the chin in the mire—he was shrieking miserably—he sunk over the mouth—his exertions to escape increased—the mud covered his nose—he began to cough and splutter for breath—while he struggled hard with his arms to keep himself above the surface—had he been one of the best swimmers alive—alas ! he was now neither on earth nor in water—his eyes were still visible. Father of mercies, let me forget their expression—their hopeless dying glare, as he gradually sunk deeper and deeper into the quagmire. Oh ! what a horrible grave ! he disappeared, but his hands were still visible—he clasped them together—then opened them again—the fingers spread out, and quivered like aspen leaves, as he held them up towards heaven in an attitude of supplication. There—he is gone.

By the time the last of our stragglers had dragged their weary limbs into the enclosure, the shouting and firing again waxed warm in the direction of the boats; so we made all sail towards them the instant we had scrambled over the rude stockade, leaving the other wounded Spaniard, who lay in a harder part of the mud, to his fate, notwithstanding the poor fellow's heart-piercing supplication not to be left to perish in so horrible a manner as his comrade, who had just disappeared. We advanced as rapidly as we could, and presently came in sight of this new scene of action. The boats were filled with our people who had been left to guard them, but were still aground, although the flood was fast making. They had evidently made the most desperate attempts to get them afloat, and

had been wading up to their waists in the mud. Four white Spaniards were blazing away at them, and at least one hundred and fifty naked negroes were crowding round the head of the creek, and firing from half-a-dozen old rusty muskets, and throwing spears made of some sort of hard wood burnt at the ends, while several were employed cutting down the mangroves and throwing them into the mud, so as to be able to pass over them like a mat, and get at the boats. One or two of the demon-like savages were *routing* on bullocks' horns, while six or seven had already fallen wounded, and lay bellowing and struggling on the ground before the well-directed fire of our people.

"Advance, Mr Sprawl, for the love of heaven," the midshipman in charge of the party in the boats sung out—"advance, or we are lost; our ammunition is almost out."

Our own danger made it sufficiently evident, without this hint, that our only chance of safety was by a desperate effort to drive our opponents back into the wood, and there keep them at bay until the boats floated.

"Ay, ay, my boys," cried Lanyard, "keep your fire—don't run short."

"Confound you, don't fire," shouted Mr Sprawl, "or you will hit some of us," as several of the boat's crew nearest us continued, notwithstanding, to pepper away; then, to his own people—"Follow me, men; if we don't drive them into the wood, as Mr Lanyard says, till the tide makes, we are lost."

"Hurrah!" shouted the brave fellows, "give them

a touch of the pike and cutlass, but no firing.—
Hurrah ! ”

When we charged them, the negroes and their white leaders were in an instant driven into the recesses of the jungle, but not before we had captured three more of the Spaniards and seven of their black allies. Our object being in the mean time attained, we called a halt, and sent back a man to the boats, with orders to advise us the moment they were afloat. Worn out and feeble as most of the party were, from want of food and fatigue, many fell asleep in a moment, leaning against trees, or slipped down on the twisted roots of the mangroves. Every thing had continued quiet for about a quarter of an hour, no sound being heard beyond an occasional shout or wild cry in the recesses of the brushwood, when all at once the man we had despatched to the rear, came rushing up to us at the top of his speed.

“ The boats will be afloat in ten minutes, sir.”

“ Thank heaven, thank heaven,” I exclaimed.

“ But an Eboe canoe,” continued the man, suddenly changing my joy into sadness, “ with more than fifty people on board, is now paddling up the creek.”

“ The devil ! ” exclaimed Mr Sprawl, “ are we never to get clear of this infernal corner ? ” And then recollecting who he was, and where he was, and that the lives of the whole party were dependent on his courage and self-possession, he rose, calm and resolute, from where he had sat himself down on the root of a bush.

“ Men, we may go to the right about now and be off to the boats—so send the wounded forward ; the

officers and marines will bring up the rear. So heave ahead, will ye? but no rushing now—be cool, for the credit of the ship."

The instant we retreated, the sound of the negro horns and drums again commenced, showing that our movements were watched; the yells rose higher than ever, and dropping shots whistled over-head, clipping off a leaf here and a dry branch there. We sculled along, the noises behind us increasing, until we once more reached the head of the creek. The boats were by this time not afloat exactly, but the advance of the tide had so *thinned* the mud, that it was clear, if we could once get the people on board, we should have little difficulty in sliding them into deep water. However, the nearest could not be got within boat-hook length of the bank, and two of the oars being laid out to form a gangway, no sooner did the first seaman step along them, than—crack—one gave way, and the poor fellow plumped up to the waist in the mud. If we were to get disabled in our fins, certain destruction must ensue; this was palpable to all of us; so we had to scramble on board through the abominable stinking slime the best way we could, without risking any more of the ash staves. In the mean time the uncouth noises and firing in the rear came nearer and increased.

"So now, hand the prisoners on board, and place them beside their comrades there," shouted Mr Sprawl.

Easier said than done. Taking advantage of the uproar, they had hung back, and now as the first of the savages appeared from under the green trees, evidently with an intention of again attacking us, they fairly

turned tail, and before we could prevent them, they were off, and for ever beyond our ken. The last of our people had got on board, all to a poor boy, who had been badly wounded, indeed ham-strung with a knife, and as he had fainted on the brink from pain and loss of blood, for a moment he had been forgotten. But only for a moment.

"God help me, God help me," said I, "why, it is poor little Graham, my own servant; shove close to, and let me try to get him on board." The lad spoken of was a slight brown-haired boy, about fifteen years of age. The sound of my voice seemed to revive him; he lifted his head; but the four Spanish prisoners, whom we had secured on board, on the instant, as if moved by one common impulse, made a bound over-board; although they sank up to the waist, they made a desperate attempt to reach the bank; the leading one, who seemed to have been an officer, shouting out to their allies in the wood, "*Camaradas, una golpe bueno, y somos salvados—una golpe fuerte, y somos libres.*" This was the signal for a general rush of the combined column from the thicket; the black naked savages, led on by the white crew of the slaver. As they rushed down to the brink, the poor wounded lad made a desperate attempt to rise; and as he ran a step or two staggering towards the creek, he looked behind him at the negroes, who were advancing with loud shouts. He then, with his face as pale as ashes, and lips blue as indigo, and eyes starting from the socket, called out, "For the dear love of Jesus, shove ahead, and save me; Oh! Mr Sprawl, save me! Mr Brail,

for God Almighty's sake, don't desert me, Oh sir!" A black savage had rushed forward and seized him—I fired—he dropped, dragging the boy down with him; and I could see him in his agony try to tear him with his teeth, while the helpless lad struggled with all his might to escape from the dying barbarian. He did get clear of him; and with a strength that I could not believe he had possessed, he once more got on his legs, and hailed me again; but the uproar was now so loud, and the firing so hot, that I could not hear what he said.

"The boats are afloat, the boats are afloat!" shouted twenty voices at once. At this very moment a negro caught the lad round the waist, another laid hold of him by the hair, and before he could free himself, the latter drew his knife round his neck—the next instant the trunk, with the blood gushing from the severed arteries, was quivering amongst the mud, while the monster held aloft the bleeding head with its quivering and twitching features.

"Heaven have mercy on us—Heaven have mercy on us!" said I; but we were now widening our distance fast, although I could see them strip the body with the speed of the most expert camp-follower; and while the Spaniards on shore were, even under our fire, trying to extricate their comrades, all of them wounded, who were floundering in the slime and ooze, their black allies were equally active in cutting up and mutilating the poor boy with the most demoniacal ferocity and I dare not attempt further description of a scene so replete with horror and abomination. We poled along, with all the little strength

that a day of such dreadful incidents, and a climate of the most overpowering heat and fearful insalubrity, had left us. At length the creek widened so as to allow us to ply our oars, when we perceived the large Eboe war-canoe, already mentioned, in the very act of entering the narrow canal we were descending. As we approached, we had an opportunity of observing the equipment of this remarkable craft ; it was upwards of sixty feet long, and manned by forty hands—twenty of a side, all plying their great broad-bladed paddles. These men sat close to the gunwale of the vessel on each side, looking forward, and delving up the water with their shovel-shaped paddles, the two rows sufficiently apart to leave room for upwards of fifty naked men and women to be stowed amidships. These last were all bound with withes, or some kind of country rope ; and although there were no serious or very evident demonstrations of grief amongst them, yet it at once occurred to me, that they were slaves sent down to our black friend's depot, to await the arrival of the next vessel, or probably they were intended to have completed the polacre's cargo. An old white-headed, yellow-skinned negro, bearing the tatooed marks of a high-caste man of his tribe on his square-featured visage, as if the skin had been peeled off his temples on each side, was seated in the bow. He evidently took us for part of the crew of some slaver lying below. He shouted to us, and pointed to his cargo ; but we had other fish to fry, and accordingly never relaxed in our pulling, until at five in the afternoon, we were once more on board of the felucca.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EVENING AFTER THE BRUSH.

ON mustering, we found our loss had been exceedingly severe—no fewer than seven missing, five of whom, I knew, had been killed outright, and fourteen wounded, some of them seriously enough. The first thing we did was to weigh and drop down out of gunshot of the fort, when we again anchored close under the bank on the opposite side of the river. By the time we were all snug it was near six o'clock in the evening ; and the wild cries and uproar on the bank had subsided, no sound marking the vicinity of our dangerous neighbours, excepting a startling shout now and then, that gushed from the mangrove jungle ; while a thick column of smoke curled up into the calm evening sky from the smoking ruins of the house. Presently, thin grey vapours arose from the surface of the water on each bank, and rolled sluggishly towards us from the right and left, until the two sheets of mist nearly met. Still a clear canal remained in the middle of the noble stream, as if its dark flow had been narrowed to a space that a pistol-shot would have flown across point-blank. For an hour, the

fog increased, until it became like wreaths of wool, and then, when at the densest, it rose gradually, until the bushes on each side of the river became dimly visible, as if a gauze screen had been interposed between us and them. It continued gradually to roll back, right and left, landward ; until it folded over and overlapped the trees on the banks, creeping along the tops of them, yet leaving the air clear as crystal above its influence, where presently the evening star rose sparkling as brightly as if it had been a frosty sunset. But we were not long to enjoy this pure atmosphere, for right ahead of us a thicker body of vapour than what had come off previously began to roll down the river, floating in the air about ten or twelve feet from the surface of the water, where it hung in a well-defined cloud, without in any way melting into the clear atmosphere overhead. When it reached within a cable's length of us, it became stationary, and owned allegiance to the genius of the sea-breeze, growing thin and smoke-like, and diffusing itself, and poisoning the air all round. It was the most noxious I ever breathed.

“ Palpable marsh miasmata ; the yellow fever in visible perfection,” quoth Lieutenant Sprawl.

Through this mist, the glowing sun, now near his setting, suddenly became shorn of his golden hair, and obliged us with a steady view of his red bald globe ; while his splendid wake, that half an hour before sparkled on the broad rushing of the mighty stream, converting its whirling eddies into molten gold, was suddenly quenched under the chill pestilential

fen-damp ; and every thing looked as like the shutting in of a winter's night in Ould Ireland as possible, with a dash of vapour from my own river Lee, which has mud enough to satisfy even a Cork pig, and that is saying a good deal. Had we only had the cold, the similitude would have been perfect.

The sun set ; and all hands, men and officers, carried on in getting themselves put to rights as well as they could, after a day of such excitement and stirring incidents. None of the wounded, I was rejoiced to find, were likely to slip through our fingers ; but the fate of the poor fellows who were missing—What was it ? Had they been fairly shot down, or sabred on the spot, or immolated afterwards—after the scenes we had witnessed, what might it not have been ? The surgeon's mate, who constituted part of our appointment, was a skilful fellow in his way, and I had soon the gratification to see all the men who had been hurt properly cared for. As for my own wound, thanks to the profuse hæmorrhage, the sensation was now more that of a stunning blow than any thing else ; and, with the exception of the bandage round my head, I was not a great deal the worse, neither to look at, nor indeed in reality. Old Davie Doublepipe, Dick Lanyard, and myself, had dived into the small cabin ; and having taken all the precautions that men could do in our situation, we sat down, along with Pumpbolt the master, the two reefers, who had come in the frigate's boats, and little Bin-nacle, to our salt junk and grog.

"A deuced comfortable expedition, Brail, my darling, we have had this same day," *quod* Dick.

"Very," responded Benjamin Brail, Esquire. "But, here's to you, my man, *Dum vivimus vivamus*—so spare me that case bottle of rum."

However, we were too awkwardly placed to spend much time over our frugal repast, as the poets say; so presently we were all on deck again. How beautiful, and how different the scene. A small cool breath of wind from the land had again rolled away the impure air from the bosom of the noble river, and every thing overhead was once more clear and transparent. The bright new risen moon was far advanced in the second quarter, and cast a long trembling wake of silver light on the water, sparkling like diamonds on the tiny ripples, while the darkened half of the chaste planet herself was as perfectly visible, as if her disk had been half silver and half bronze. Her mild light, however, was not strong enough to quench the host of glorious stars that studded the cloudless firmament. On either hand, the black banks were now clearly defined against the sky; the one shore being lit up by the rising moon, and the other by the last golden tints of the recently set sun.

The smoke over the site of the conflagration, which had been pale grey during the daylight, became gradually luminous and bright as the night closed in; and every now and then, as if part of the building we had seen on fire had fallen in, a cloud of bright sparks would fly up into the air, spangling

the rolling masses of the crimson-tinged wreaths of smoke. At length the light and flame both slowly decreased, until they disappeared altogether; leaving no indication as to their whereabouts.

"Come," said I, "we may all turn in quietly for the night. The savages ashore there seem at length to be asleep."

The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when a bright glare, as if a flame from a heap of dry wood chips had suddenly blazed up, once more illuminated the whole sky right over where we had seen the sparks and luminous smoke, while a loud concert of Eboe drums, horns, and wild shouts, arose in the distance.

"Some vile Fetish rite is about being celebrated," said I.

The noise and glare continued, and with a sicken-ing feeling, I turned away and looked towards the rising moon. Her rays trembled on the gurgling and circling eddies of the river, making every trunk of a tree, or wreath of foam as it floated down with the current, loom clear and distinct, as they swam in black chains and dark masses past the sparkling line her chaste light illuminated. I had leaned for near a quarter of an hour with folded arms, resting my back against the lowered yard, admiring the serenity of the scene, and contrasting it with the thrilling events of the day, pondering in my own mind what the morrow was to bring forth, when a large branch of a tree, covered with foliage, floated past and attracted my attention—the black leaves twinkling in the night breeze between us and the shining river. Immediately

a small canoe, with two dark figures in it, launched out from the darkness ; swam down the river into the bright wake of the glorious planet, where the water flowed past in a sheet of molten silver, and floated slowly across it. The next moment it vanished in the darkness. I saw it distinctly—there could be no mistake.

“ I say, friend Sprawl,”—he was standing beside me enjoying the luxury of a cigar,—“ did you see that ? ” pointing in the direction where the tiny craft had disappeared. He had also seen it.

“ We had better keep a bright look-out,” continued I ; “ those savages may prove more venturesome in the darkness than we chose this morning to believe possible.”

I kept my eye steadily in the direction where we had seen the canoe vanish ; but she continued invisible, and nothing for some time occurred to create any alarm. Every thing remained quiet and still. Even the shouting on shore had entirely ceased. On board of the felucca, the men were clustered round a blazing fire forward, that cast a bright red glare on the rushing water as it whizzed past, lap-lapping against our bows, and closing in on the rudder, making it *cheep* as it was *jigged* from side to side, with a buzzing gurgle ; while the small round whirling eddies, visible by the tiny circles of white froth and hissing bells, where the divided waters spun away as if glad of their reunion in our wake, rolled down astern of us, blending together in one dark eddy, wherein the boats under the tafferel sheered about, with the water flashing at their

bows, like so many captured hippopotami, until I expected every moment to see the taught painters torn away.

The wounded by this time were all stowed snugly below, but the figures on the crowded deck of the little vessel glanced wildly round the crackling fire. Many of the men, who had floundered in the slime of the creek, appeared like absolute statues of plaster of Paris, when the mud had dried on them, which they were busily employed in picking off, great patches of the hardened filth having adhered to their clothes like greaves and cuisses. Some were engaged cooking their food, others were cleaning their arms, while the grog went round cheerily, and the loud laugh and coarse jest evinced the buoyancy of young hearts, even while they sat within ear-shot of the groans of their wounded comrades, and the bodies of those who had fallen were scarce cold ; while the most appalling dangers to themselves had just been surmounted.

Lanyard was now called below by the surgeon's mate to inspect the condition of the wounded. Old Bloody Politeful and myself accompanied him. None of the sound part of the crew had yet turned in, but, in the hurry of going ashore, all their hammocks had been left slung, and, as the between decks was barely five feet high, it was rather a bothersome matter to navigate between the rows of them, empty and full. Two large lanterns hung from hooks screwed into the beams amidships, but the lights within were none of the brightest, nor were the glass panes any of the clearest ; so they did not greatly elucidate the

state of matters ; but, in another sense, if to afford heat to the confined berth-deck had been an object, they constituted a most efficient apparatus, from the hot fat smoke that screwed out of the little perforated tin domes at the top. Immediately above the lanterns, that were suspended by pieces of spunyarn about six inches long, and on each side of the beam, where it had been bevelled away, was arrayed a whole swarm of cockroaches in two circles, with their heads inward, and their long feelers in perpetual motion, like the spears of the serried phalanx of old,—a more courageous beetle than the rest, every now and then making a forward movement of a step or two, until the heat of the ascending flame scorched him back again. However, we soon had to attend to other matters.

The first amongst the wounded that I had occasion to address was the corporal of marines, of whom mention has been before made,—one of the boats'-crews who were leagued with us. He was, although reputed half crazy in the ship, a fine handsome young fellow—a Scotchman. When we came down he was speaking to a messmate, who stood beside his hammock helping him to some drink.

“ Oh, man,” said he, “ did ye no remark the clearness and stillness of the creek, after leaving the muddy river, just before the action began—immediately before it was stirred up by that hideous, highland-cow-looking beast of a hippopotamy ; the vile brute that raised the mud, until it converted the crystal clear water into pease brose, and be d——d to it ? I hate these wee Highland *nowt*. A big sonsy stot is

a manageable animal, and respectable withal, and quiet ; but thae sma' hieland deevils !——Hech ! what sharp horns they have ! And although a bold front aye quells them, still they always are on the look-out to take you at disadvantage—in the louping of a dyke, for instance, wha will assure ye that they shall not kittle your hinderlins ?—But what am I raving about ? —Ou ay ! about the clear creek, with the white scales of the bit fishes turning up their sides to the light, and glancing like silver far down in the transparent depths of the deep water, as we lay on our oars. Guid kens—forbye being weak and worn, and scant o' glee, for a leaden weight lay on my speerits—yet the sicht drove me aff and awa' in a moment amang my ain native blue hills and heathery braes—ay, and clear saugh-fringed sparkling burnies too, rippling bonnily in the sunshine owre their half-dry channels of bright sand and pebbles, with the trouts louping *plump, plump*, out of the swirls at the bottom of the ripples at the grey flies, and then glancing up the rushing streams, zig-zag like fire-flaughts from ae shadowy bank till another—although all the while I was conscious that maybe, between disease, and shot, and cauld iron, I was but a step frae heeven—we'll no name the other place. Oh, that thocht of my home brack in upon my mind like a gleam of sunshine on a stormy sea.”

“ Hillo, there's poetry for you, Master Lanyard,” said I, a good deal surprised.

The poor fellow had heard me speak, and presently appeared to become highly excited, and to breathe

very hard. Sprawl and I had by this time stuck our heads up between the rows of hammocks.

" Well, Lennox, what may be wrong with you ? " said I.

" Nothing very particular," was the answer ; " only I am afraid that I am about departing for *yon* place."

" What place ? " said I.

" Ou ! I just meant to insinuate to your honour, that I was dying."

" Pooh, nonsense ! " said Sprawl ; " don't be so chicken-hearted, man. No fear of you, if you will but keep a good heart."

" It may be sae, it may be sae ; but I am doomed, and I know it."

" How ? " said I, much interested—" How ? Tell me what forebodings you have had—do now ? "

To make what passed after this intelligible, it is proper to remark, that this poor fellow, notwithstanding his peculiarities, was the most sober and hard-working man in the frigate—a favourite with all hands, men and officers. It appeared that, for several days before the setting out of the expedition, he had been suffering from dysentery,—indeed, he had been so very ill, that this very morning the surgeon had given him eighty drops of laudanum ;—notwithstanding, he would not on any account be left behind, but insisted on going in the boats. It was soon evident, however, that even during the attack he was unnaturally elevated by the effects of the medicine ; for although a known and tried hand, and acknowledged to be one of the bravest men in the ship, yet his

extraordinary conduct had startled many of us, myself amongst others. When the long shed was set fire to, for instance, I thought he was drunk, for he kept swaggering about, with half shut eyes, and speaking to himself, in a manner altogether unaccountable, knowing as I did the character of the man ; but in the tumult I had after this lost sight of him.

“ What makes you so down-hearted, my man ? ”

I now saw that the poor fellow was evidently still under the influence of laudanum, although the exhilarating effects had evaporated. It afterwards came to my knowledge, that the surgeon, seeing his weak state when the boats got on board again, had given him another dose, but this had not yet had time to operate.

“ What makes you so down-hearted ? ” I repeated.

“ Down-hearted ! ” he rejoined, his eyes twinkling brightly, as the fresh doze began to operate ; “ down-hearted, bless your honour ! I was rather so, certainly, some time ago, but now I begin to feel myself growing the happiest fellow in the whole ship,—yes, the happiest—happy—hap”—and he fell over into a short troubled snooze.

Some time elapsed, and I had removed to another part of the vessel, when I again heard his voice.

“ Stand clear until I get out—don’t you hear them call all hands ? —so,”—and before I could prevent him he had floundered on deck.

We lifted him into his hammock again. He still continued to breathe very hard. At length he looked me right in the face,—

“ I say, master-at-arms—Lord ! what a comical

dream I have had ! Why, we were all ashore cutting out,—what do you think ?—a little heathen god, defended by bull-dogs !—and a devil of a good fight he made of it, ha, ha, ha !—We were too many for him though ; and when we had set fire to his house, and split the skulls of a thousand of his people or so, the little grinning, monkeyfied son-of-a-gun, just as I was taking aim at him, jumped down from his perch, and flew like a cannon-shot right against me, giving me such a settler, ha, ha, ha !—Zounds ! only fancy Jack Lennox mentioned in the return, as ‘ Killed by a heathen god ! the bloody little image pitching itself right into his stomach ! ’—ha, ha, ha ! ”

And so in truth it was. For when our friend Sergeant Quacco bolted, on finding the shrine of the Fetish no sanctuary, and had whirled the image amongst us, the uncouth missile had brought up in the pit of poor Lennox’s stomach sure enough, where it had told most fearfully.

All the wounded complained greatly of thirst, scarcely one of them in his groanings saying a word about the *pain* of his wounds.

Another poor fellow, an Irishman, who belonged to the frigate’s mizen-top, had got a cruel cut transversely down his cheek, which it had fairly laid open.

“ Well, Callaghan,” said I, in my new capacity of surgeon’s mate, “ how do you get on ? Ugly gash that—spoiled your beauty, my fine fellow. But never mind—Greenwich at the worst under your lee, you know.”

He looked at me, with a face as pale as death, but with a comical expression notwithstanding, and a bright twinkle of his eye—"Please you, sir, tobacco juice nips like fury."

"I don't doubt it. But what have you to do with it at present? Wait until your wound gets better. Surely you have not a quid in your cheek *now?*"

He sucked in his sound cheek; but the exertion started the plaster-straps that had been applied across the wound in the other, and the blood began to flow.

"Blazes!" said he, "if that d—d quid won't be the death of me!" and thereupon he hooked it out of his potato-trap with his finger, and threw the cherished morsel with great violence from him.

Here our Scotch friend again broke in upon us—"I say, you Clinker—you master-at-arms—damn me (gude forgie me for swearing) if I think it is a dream after all. I am now sure it was a *bona fide* spree that we have had on shore, and that my days are numbered from the thump I received from the graven image. Lord, that Saunders Skelp should have been left to *dree such weird!* Hech, but *the contusion* was most awful sair!"

I pricked up my ears when, first of all in his ravings, I heard the poor fellow pronounce the words *bona fide*, but followed up as this was by his speaking of a *contusion*, a word utterly unknown amongst the crew on the berth-deck, I became riveted to the spot, and most anxiously desirous to know something more of our marine. I had stepped a few paces towards the

ladder, but my curiosity again drew me to the side of his hammock.

"I say, friend, wha may ye be?" said the man—in the common routine of the ship, I had never noticed his Scotch accent before; more Scotch now, by the way, than it usually was—"I say, friend, what for do you persevere in haunting me in this way?"

"Why, my good man, I am only lending a hand to see you and the rest of the wounded properly cared for—believe me, I have no desire to bother you or any one else."

"It may be all vera true," said he, turning himself, apparently with great pain, on his back; "it may be vera true—but noo, sin' I am persuaded that I dinna dream, let me gather the sma' wits God has gi'en me weel about me. Let me see—let me see—we all ken the service we were ordered on this blessed morning—nane better than Saunders Skelp—what am I dreaming o'? Jack Lennox, I mean—gude hae a care o' us, my harns* are strangely confused." Then, after a pause, during which he appeared to be exerting himself to call in his scattered thoughts—"Weel a-weel, ye a' ken wha focht, and wha sang sma, and mony a stalwart blow was struck—that I ken—and sickly as I was, it behoved me, the son o' auld Pate Skelp of Lincomdodie, to do my *devoir*, as Sir Walter says, and to it I buckled; but I shall believe in second sicht or any other miracle noo, for we drove a'

* Brains.

obstruction before us like chaff, until we encountered wi' that wee wudden goddity ; when, to stop our advance (I saw it as plain as peas), the creature whirled aff its perch, and flew crack against the midriff of me, Saunders, like a stane frae a *testudo*—Hoot, no, of Jack Lennox, I mean."

" My good friend," said I, " you must be very ill—compose yourself." Then aside to one of the men, " Are you sure Lennox is not tipsy ? " The poor fellow overheard me.

" Tipsy ! me foo ! " and he lay back and drew a long breath like a porpoise. He immediately continued—" Ay, and I believe I am foo after all—but wha may ye be that taunts me thereanent sae unceremoniously, and me mair than half dead ? It was na *yeer* siller that slokened me, I'se warrant, if foo I am—Foo !—sma' manners have ye to taunt a puir chiel like me with being foo—my certie, whisky maun hae been plentier than gentlemen among us the day ; or foo I neer wad hae been—Foo ! "

I was now much interested about the poor fellow, and as I incommoded the wounded man who lay in the cot next him to port, I moved round to the other side, and again addressed our eccentric friend. " Now, my good man," said I, " I don't want to tease you ; but as the doctor says he has great doubts of you, I again ask you if I can do any thing for you ; have you any bequest to leave ? "

" I say, freen'," rapped out the poor fellow, " the doctor may go be damned,—this was certainly very plain, if not very complimentary ;—“ and it will not

break my heart if ye're no that far ahint him. But I shall live to dance at his *dregy** yet. What can *he* say to a man like me? But you, sir, it was you that accused me of getting drunk—and drunk I may be after all, for my head sooms most awfu'."

The poor creature's mind was now utterly a wool-gathering. Presently he called out, "I say, my lad, what are you abusing that brute beast for? Haud aff the dog, sir—that's the beast that wanted to worry Mr Brail; but never mind, dinna massacre him, noo since you have ta'en him—never abuse a prisoner."

I began to get tired of this, and was about moving from where I stood, and going on deck, when, on turning round, I found the ladder had been unshipped on purpose to afford access to some locker behind it, and Sprawl and I, unless we had chosen to give additional trouble to poor devils who were most of them sufficiently *done* already, were obliged to remain a little longer where we were. Immediately after this Lennox again sung out, "Neebour, can you tell me whar about we are, eh?"—and before I could answer he continued, "Hech, man, he's but a puir shilpit cretur, that Brail lad." I was half inclined to be angry at this unceremonious opinion of my personal qualifications, but to be thus apostrophized to my face, was so very absurd, that I laughed in spite of myself. "A puir bit animal, sir," the man continued—"and tak my word for it, Saunders Skelp's word, that he must have been ony thing but gleg at

* Dirge—burial.

the uptak. The chiel, I'se warrant, was slow, slow at his lair—a kind of *yird taid* as it were—and what the deevil that hairum-scairum captain of ours, Sir Oliver, could see in the animal to take him to sea with him, I'm sure I canna tell. But then the comodore is siccán a throughither kind o' chap himsell, that when ane has time to reflect on't, there is nay miracle in his drawing to this camsteerie callant, Benjie Brail, after all."

I could no longer contain, so smothering my laughter the best way I could, I left him, and was in the act of ascending when I heard our friend Skelp again maundering to himself.

" God, to have seen the birr with which the wee deevil of a heathen god flew right through the air, and gied me siccán a devel in the wame. Hech, it is ominous—vary ominous, and I'll die o't, I'll die o't." Then, as he hove about on the other tack, " it is maist awfu' het in this cursed hole ; oh for a green tree and a cool breeze !

‘ Tityre, tu patulæ recubans sub tegmine fagi.’ ”

A long pause.

“ Lord, but it's chokey !”

I laughed outright, and so did Sprawl. Saunders noticed this, and in his delirium began to laugh too.

“ What's that skirling like the curlew one moment, and grunting like a nine farrow pig the other ? I say, friend, what kittles ye sae ? Come here, my wee man, come here ;” and raising himself in his hammock, he stared idly into my face, and then shook his head violently. “ Heard ever any Christian the

like o' that?" said the poor corporal; " hear till that," and he again walloped his *cabeza* from side to side; " dinna ye hear hoo my brain is dried up and knotted in my *cranium* by this vile fever? Safe us, it's a' into lumps like aitmeal in brose, and noo the lumps have hardened into a consistence like flint,—losh! how they rattle in my skull like chucky stanes in a wean's rash-basket!" Another shake of his head. " Ech, the very fire-sparks are fleeing from my ee. I wonder if they can be hardened ideas; at ony rate they have struck fire frae ilk ither. Do ye ken I could write poetry the noo—I'll be up and overboard, if you dinna haud me—I'll be up and overboard."

Discreet even in his madness, he had given warning and time for the hint to be taken by his mess-mates, and he was now forcibly held down.

As he lay back he continued to murmur, " Oh, puir Saunders Skelp, puir Saunders Skelp, that ye should hae gotten yer death-blow frae a bloody wee heathen god, and you the son of a minister's man—a godly bairn of the Reformation!" Then lifting his head, as if his own exclamation had startled him, " Saunders Skelp—wha ca's on Saunders Skelp—there is nae Saunders Skelp here, I trow? As for you, ye wee blackened deevil," (me, Benjie Brail, viz.) " Oh, man, if I had gotten the educating o' ye, my taws wad hae driven mair lair intil ye at the but-end, than ten Southern maisters wha appeal till the head."

Our attention was here diverted by the hail of the look-out on deck.

"Boat, ahoy!" A pause. "Coming here?" Still no answer.

I scrambled up the ladder, by this time replaced, accompanied by Mr Sprawl and Lanyard, who, during my idle palaver with the Scotch corporal, had made an overhaul of all the poor fellows, and seen every one's wants attended to. When we came on deck, we found a cluster of people at the aftermost part of the felucca. The moment we advanced, little Binnacle said, "Some one has twice hailed us from the water astern, sir, but we can make nothing of it. We hear the voice, but we cannot see the man who shouts, sir."

Both Davie Doublepipe and myself strained our eyes to catch the object; for although it was a bright moonlight overhead, yet astern of us the thick mist that had rolled down the river, and still hovered in that direction, concealed every thing under its watery veil.

Presently we heard the splash of a paddle, and a voice shouted out, "Oh, dis current, dis current! I never sall be able to stem him. Send a boat to pick me up; do—send a boat, massa."

This was one thing we begged to decline doing.

"My man, whoever you may be, you must shove ahead, and get alongside yourself, for no boat shall be sent to you until we make you out," sung out old Dick.

Here we could hear the creature, whatever it was, puff and blow, and the splashing of the paddle became louder, while every now and then it gave a thump with its open palm on the side of the canoe, or what-

ever it might be it was in. At length a small dory, as it is called in the West Indies, a tiny sort of canoe, shot out of the fog, with a dark figure paddling with all his might in the stern, while a slighter one was sitting in the bow. He was soon alongside, and who should scramble on board but our friend the resetter. He took no notice of any of us, but, turning round, stooped down over the side, and said something in an African dialect, that I could not understand, to the figure in the boat, who immediately handed up what appeared to me to be a log of wood, which he put away carefully beside the long-gun. He then called out again to the party remaining in the canoe to come on deck, when a handsome young Eboe woman stepped on board.

“ Now, captain,” said our free-and-easy friend—“ now, captain, will you hab de goodness to hoist in my dory ? ”

“ And for what should I do that same ? ” said the fourth lieutenant, a little taken aback by the fellow’s cool impudence. “ Little reason why I should not knock you overboard, my darling, after the transactions of this morning.”

“ Transaction, captain ? O, massa, I don’t know him ; but dis I knows, if you hab got into one scrape dis day, you desarve it—ah, very mosh.”

A momentary feeling of irritation shot across Lanyard, but the absurdity of the whole affair instantly quelled it, and, in spite of himself, he could not help laughing.

“ Well, well, Clinker, take care of this man, and

the woman who is with him, will ye? and tell Jerry to get supper in the cabin."

The lieutenants and I resumed our walk on the confined deck of the little vessel for a quarter of an hour, when the steward came and announced that supper was ready. We went below, where our comforts in a small way had been excellently well attended to; the lamp was burning cheerily, the small table was covered with an immaculate table-cloth, although none of the finest; and two well-filled decanters of Teneriffe sparkled on the board, while a beautiful junk of cold salt beef, and a dish of tatties in their skins, with the steam smoking up through the cracks in them, and a large case-bottle of capital old Jamaica, gave assurance of a small streak of comfort after the disasters and fatigues of the day.

Speaking of potatoes, stop till I immortalize my old mother's receipt. "To dress a potato—*wash* it well, but no *scraping*; at the thickest end cut off a piece"—(I beg the dear old woman's pardon—*pace*)—"cut off a piece the size of a sixpence. This is the safety-valve through which the steam escapes, and all rents in the skin are thereby prevented—just as the aforesaid valve prevents a rupture in the steam-boiler; and if you do this carefully, oh for the mealiness (*maliness*) thereof!"

Lanyard had asked old Pumpbolt the master, little Binnacle his only mid, the youngster who had behaved so gallantly at the start, to sup with him; along with Mr Marline, one of the master's mates of the Gazelle; and young De Walden, another reefer

of the dear old barky, a most beautiful, tall, handsome, although slightly framed, boy. So far as I can judge, the youngster stood about five feet ten. He might have been more. He had his shoes on, but no stockings — very wide trowsers — no waist-coat nor jacket, but a broad white-and-blue striped shirt, folded very far back at the throat, and no neck-cloth. He wore an enormously broad-brimmed straw hat, with a black ribbon round it, in rather a natty bow on the left side, while his loins were still girt with his by no means maiden sword. As I was diving into the cabin through the small companion, he came up to me—“ Do you know, sir, that I cannot sup with Mr Lanyard to-night? I wish you would ask him to excuse me, sir”—

“ Indeed, Master de Walden,” said I, “ I cannot; you must come; I am sure a glass of wine will do you good.”

“ I know, sir, I know, and am very much obliged to you; but—but I have no clothes, sir. I wet my jacket this morning in weighing the stream-anchor, and my only other one is so covered with mud, that really I am unable decently to appear in it.”

“ Poo, never mind, boy; come down in any way you choose.”

We adjourned to the cabin. Old David, as pleasant a fellow as ever stepped, notwithstanding his peculiarities; Dick Lanyard, a darling in his way; Pump-bolt and myself sat down at one side of the table, having first deliberately taken our coats off. We were confronted by little Binnacle, and the other

midshipmen, who came down immediately after. Young de Walden sat in his trowsers and shirt, with his black silk cravat tied only once round his neck, and a red silk handkerchief round his waist. The dress set off the handsome young fellow's figure to great advantage, the fineness of his waist giving a splendid relief to the spread of his shoulders, while his beautifully moulded neck, white as the driven snow, contrasted strikingly with his noble but sun-burnt countenance; while his hair curled in short black ringlets far back on his large marble forehead.

The salt junk was placed on the table, and we all began our operations with great zeal; the biscuit vanished in bushelsful,—the boys were happy as princes, the smallest, little Binnacle, becoming talkative from the comfortable meal, and the exhilarating effects of a stiffish glass of grog, when who should walk into the cabin but Sergeant Quacco himself? He had diversified his loveliness after a most remarkable manner; first, he was naked as the day his mother bore him, all to his waistcloth of red serge. He had sandals of coarse untanned leather on his feet, a cross belt of black leather slung over his right shoulder, which supported a bayonet without a sheath, and into which the rust had eaten—the whole affair being much honeycombed—while his broad chest and brawny arms were tatooed in gunpowder or indigo, with the most fantastic shapes. On his head he wore an old military shako, the brass ornaments cruelly tarnished, and carried a long wand of wild cane in his

hand, of the thickness of my thumb, and about ten feet high, the top of which kept rasp, rasping, slantingly against the roof of the low cabin as he spoke.

"Hillo, steward, what do you mean by this, that you let these savages turn us out of house and home in this manner?" cried the fourth lieutenant.—Then addressing the interloper—"My fine fellow, you are a little off your cruising ground, so be making yourself scarce—Bolt—vanish—get on deck with you, or I shall be after swearing a very ugly oath."

"Massa, massa," quoth the man, "easy for you chuck me oberboard—nobody can say you shan't—but only listen leetle bit, and I know you youself shall say my hargument good for someting."

There was a pause, during which he civilly waited for Lanyard to speak, when finding he had no inclination to do so, he continued—

"Ah I know, and I older man den you, massa; people never should trike when dem blood is up, unless in de case of fight for Kin Shorge. Ah, alway wait, massa, until you see and consider of de reason of de ting."

The good-hearted fellow was rebuked before the poor black savage; I suppose the latter saw it in his face, for all at once he gathered courage, and approached close to him, and placing his large black paw—I noticed the palm was a dingy white—on his arm between the elbow and wrist, he looked up into Dick's face,—

"Massa, you have not got one wife?"

"No I have not."

"But, massa, you can fancy yourself to hab one wife."

Lanyard nodded.

"Well, den, I go on. Suppose you hab one comfortable house, plenty pig dere, yam grow all round, orange tree blossom close to, plantain trow him cool shadow over all, bending heavily in de breeze, over de house; wid de fruit ready for drop into your mout, when you look up at him; de leetle guinea pig squeak here and snort dere; we hab pineapple and star-apple—oh, wery sweet—de great corn (maise dem call him) grow all round de house; please cover him like one vine; and your servants are working and singing, and de comfortable sunshine is drying every ting, and closing all de beautiful flowers in him sleepy heat. You yousef are sitting in your chair, wid some small drop of grog, after you hab eat good dinner of goat, and maybe one broiled fis; and just when you take your pipe, light him, and put him into your mout—crack—one musket-shot sing over your head—you jomp—(who would not jomp?—Debil himself would jomp)—and before you can tink—flash—one sailor make blow at you wid him glass-clear cutlass. And ah, massa, suppose de worstest to come, and dese strangers to set fire to your quiet hut, after beating and bruising *you*; and de flames begin to crackle and hiss over de very apartment where you know your wife is, and are consuming all your goods at de same time; and dem black people *were my goods*: for if you had left we to ourself dis morning, I should have got two hundred doubloon, and five hundred piece of check

clot, from de Spanish captain, for dose one hundred and fifty slave; who," (his smile here might have been the envy of the Fiend himself,) "to prevent dem from being miserable as you call in Havanna, you hab sent to be happy in heaven." And he groaned in great bitterness of spirit.

I was much struck with all this, and looked steadfastly at the poor creature, who was standing right opposite me with his arms folded, in all the dignity of a brave man, who considers his fate sealed. There was a long pause. When he next spoke, it was in a low melancholy tone.

" De morning sun, when him first sparkle on de waterdrop dat hang like diamond on de fresh green leaf, shine on me dis very morning, one reesh and happy man—one leetle chief—master of all dem ting I speak about. White man-of-war peoples come. Sun set in de west,—red trou de sickly fog, leaving every wegitable yellow, and dry, and dusty—who him shine on now—on me, Quacco, once more—aye, but Quacco widout house, or home, or friend, or goods, more as he hab on him back—on Quacco standing up in him kin, desolate as one big large baboon de day him new catch." Here the poor fellow could no longer control his feelings, but wept bitterly—after a burst of grief, he continued, with a voice almost inarticulate from intense emotion—" If all dis was pass wid you, captain, in one leetle hot day, in one small twelve hour!" But his manhood once more rallied in his bosom, and making a step towards Lanyard, with all the native independence of a noble savage, he

said, laying one of his hands on his heart, "Yes, massa, I ask you, had all dis happen to you, let alone one poor black debil like myself, white man as you is—Kin's officer as you is—Christian person on de back of bote—can you put your hand where mine is now, and say, dat your spirit would not have been much move—dat it would not have been a bitter, bitter ting to look back to what you was when dat sun rose, and den to consider what his last light glanced on?" He now slowly drew his bayonet—I started at the motion, and Sprawl half rose from his chair, and seized the carving knife that lay on the table.

The man did not move a muscle, but continued looking steadfastly in the fourth lieutenant's face, while he placed the handle or pipe of the naked weapon in his right hand.

"Massa," at length he said, coolly and deliberately, "I am helpless and unarmed, and a poor drunken rascal beside, and in your power—one moment and you can make cut my troat." Dick returned the weapon, and signed to him to sheath it, which he did—he then unexpectedly turned round to me—"And as for you massa, if I have ill used *you* dis day, you know of de provocation—you best know what you would have done in my place. But, massa, bote for we blood is red, and you should not forget dis ting, dat one time dis forenoon it might hab been for you place to hax Serjeant Quacco to save you from dem brute beast on sore."

I was taken regularly aback, and blackie saw it; so

he now assumed an easier mien, as if conscious he had made a favourable impression.

"But what brought you here, my good man?" said I.

"De fear of death," he promptly replied. "It has enter de foolis head of de blacks dat I was de cause of de attack—dat I was in league wid you, being, as you see, one Englis gentleman like yousefs." (I had great difficulty in maintaining my gravity at all this.) "So my wife dere creep to where I hide when de evening come, and say"—here he took hold of Sprawl's hand in both of his, and looked up tenderly into his face—(any one having our friend Liston's countenance, when the Beauty is shamming Bashful, painted on the retina of his mind's eye, has a tolerable idea of the expression of Davie's face. Oh for an hour of Wilkie to have caught the two cherubs as a group!)—"Quacco"—him say '*Hokey doodle doo.*'"

"Say what?" quoth Sprawl, like to choke with suppressed laughter—"Say what?"

The poor fellow regarded the lieutenant for some time with the greatest surprise, murmuring aside, "What can de good gentleman see to amuse him so mosh?" then aloud, "Him say in de Eboe tongue, 'you old villain, your troat is to be slice dis wery night.'—'De debil,' say I, '*Jooram junkee pop,*' say I; dat is, it shan't if I can help it. So I bolt—run away—launch dory—and here I is, Serjeant Quacco, ready once more to serve his Majesty Kin Shorge—God save de Kin!"

Here old Bloody Politeful fairly exploded into the most uproarious mirth. The negro looked at him in great amazement for some time, until at length the infection caught me, when blowing all my manners to the winds, off I went at score after our friend. The peculiarities of Davie Doublepipe's voice were more conspicuous in his joyous moments, if that were possible, than when he spoke calmly; and as he shouted out, "I say, Benjie, *Joomam junkee pop*," in one tune, and "Why, Lanyard, *Hokey doodle doo*," in the other, the alternations were so startling to poor Quacco's ear, that he looked at the lieutenant and then at me first of all in great alarm, and with his eye on the door, as if to ascertain that there was no impediment to a rapid retreat. At last he seemed to comprehend the mystery, and caught the contagion of our mirth also, shouting as loud as either of us—"What dem white gentlemen can see to laugh at—what funny ting it can be? ha, ha, ha—dat big one speak wery comical; one time squeak squeak like one leetle guinea-pig, den grunt grunt like de big boar; he must surely be two mans tie up in one kin—ha, ha, ha!" The negro instantly saw the advantage he had gained over us, in being the cause of so much merriment, and he appeared determined not to lose it. "So you shee, massa Captain—you really mosh not be asame, after all, to be shivel to me and my wife—who is here cowering behind de door; I bring him dat you may see him take care of, for de men dere forward don't behave well—none at all."

"Why, Mr Serjeant," said Sprawl, "show the lady

in, and no more about it." The man said something in Ehoe, and forthwith in stepped one of the most startling apparitions that ever I witnessed. It was a tall, exquisitely formed young Ehoe woman—fair enough to have passed for a mulatto. She wore neatly worked grass buskins, that fitted round the ankle, as close as a laced boot made by Gundry. Her only dress was composed of a long web of some sort of native cloth, about a foot wide, and composed of red, blue, and yellow stripes alternately. Three or four turns of it were wrapped round her loins, and then an end hung down before, with a deep fringe of the blended colours of the stripes; while the other end was carried up from the right hip, across her back, and brought over the left shoulder, where it was again festooned, by being twined two or three turns round the left arm; which, when she entered, was folded across her bosom. Her skin was thickly tatooed at the waist, but her beautiful bosom was untouched; all to a dark peak, that projected upwards, giving the tatooing the appearance of a dark-coloured stomacher. Her cheeks and forehead were also thickly marked, but without impairing the beauty of the expression of her bland, although African features—such an eye, and such teeth! She wore large gold ear-rings; and anklets and armlets of solid silver. Her head was bound round with a large green or blue cotton shawl; and there she stood, looking at us with the greatest composure; totally unconscious of the unusualness of her costume, or the scantiness thereof.

" Well, my good man, take a glass of grog, will ye?

and here, give your wife a glass of wine, and then go and betake yourselves to rest, in the quietest corner you can find.—Here, steward, see that Serjeant Quacco and his wife are cared for—a corner forward of some kind or another until morning.”

“Never say such a ting, massa—de men were unpleasant company—can’t go to dem—so I bring my wife to sleep wid you.”

“Mighty obliged, master serjeant—but would rather be excused, if it be the same thing to you.”

“Ho, ho, ho,” laughed the savage—“I mean, massa, dat you would permit we to sleep at foot of de ladder dere, and not be obliged to go among de rude peoples in de oder part of de sip.”

“Well, well, do as you please; but let me go and secure a couple of hours’ sleep, before the tide turns, will ye?”

“Certainly, massa—would like to drink your health, though, massa—Leetle more grog, please, massa.”

“Not another drop, sir.—Steward, see Serjeant Quacco and his wife safely bestowed under the ladder there, and then fasten the door.”

Here Quacco once more stuck his round head in at the door. “Massa, I beg one fowl to kill before de fetish.”

“Get along with you, sir—away.”

Our black visitors finally disappeared, and I turned round to look at my shipmates. The first lieutenant had fallen back, with his head resting against the small side-berth, sound asleep, with a piece of beef on his fork, the latter firmly clutched in his hands; Dick

Lanyard had fairly slipped down, until he hung by his chin on the edge of the table, like a parrot suspended by his beak; old Pumpbolt had slid off his chair altogether, and was fast enough on the bare deck, with his unquenched pipe sticking in his mouth; while the poor little reefers had fallen forward with their heads on the table; Dick Marline having actually dropped with his nose into his plate, amongst the beef and potatoes; and all snoring most melodiously. We were in truth completely done up; so, leaving our friends stretched on the lockers and in the berths, and bestowed as well as the slender means of the small vessel permitted, I adjourned to the deck once more, in my capacity of pilot, to see how the weather looked.

I then returned to the cabin, and having desired the steward, who was comparatively fresh, to call me when the tide turned, I offered up my short but heart-warm prayer of thanksgiving to the God of my fathers for his great mercy vouchsafed to me during the past day; and imploring his gracious protection during the coming night, I lay down in my berth, where in a minute I was as sound asleep as the others.

CHAPTER V.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SERJEANT QUACCO.

I HAD scarcely, to my conception, been asleep at all, when I was called again. “ If ever I practise the calling of a pilot in this wide world after this ! ” said I to myself as I stumbled, yawning and stretching, about the confined cabin.

It might have been about eleven at night when I got on deck. There was a heavy ground-swell tumbling in upon us over the bar, which made the little vessel pitch violently.

“ See all clear to cut away the kedge,” said I.

But there was no need ; for the swell that rolled in was as yet deep, dark, and unbroken. I looked forth into the night, endeavouring by the starlight, for the moon was obscured by a thick bank of clouds in the eastern horizon, to distinguish the whereabouts of the bar at the river’s mouth, but all was black flowing water, and there was no sound of breakers ; so I again went below, and in a minute slept as sound as before.

I cannot precisely say how long I had been in the land of dreams, when I was again roused by the steward calling Mr Lanyard.

“ Mr Wadding ”—this was the gunner of the little

vessel—"does not like the look of the weather, sir ; it has become somewhat threatening, and the felucca is riding very uneasy since the tide has turned, sir."

The sharp jerking motion of the small craft corroborated the man's account but too forcibly ; and once more I went on deck, accompanied by the lieutenant, where I was a good deal startled by the scene before me. The ebb-tide was now running down, and past us like a mill-stream ; and the bar, which a couple of hours before was all black and undistinguishable, began now to be conspicuous, from a crescent of white waves which shone even through the darkness ; while a deep and increasing hoarse murmur, "like thunder heard remote," was borne up the river towards us on the night wind. The foaming breakers on the bar, as the tide continued to fall, spread out ; and in an hour, the rush of the tide downwards, and the tumble of the sea inwards, placed us, even at the distance of our anchorage, in a regular cauldron of broken water, where the little craft was knocked about as if she belonged to nobody, while every moment I expected the cable to part.

It was a regular snow-storm ; the swell, broken on the bar, roared into the river in splashing waves, which, when the downward current dashed against them, flew up in spouts, covering every thing with spray, that was puffed away seaward like smoke by the sharp land-breeze which had suddenly set down, counter-checking in a moment the regular easterly trade-wind. The little vessel was thus kicked here and yerked there, as if it had been a cork in the midst of the

bubbling of a boiling pot. Oh ! how I longed for daylight ! At length daylight came, and the sun began to exhale the dank pestiferous vapours that towards grey dawn had once more mantled over the water.

For an hour it was again so thick that we could see nothing in the direction of the bar ; but the noise of the breakers continued to increase ; and as the boats alongside were by this time, notwithstanding all our endeavours, half full of water, I feared that, even when the tide began to answer again, we should be unable to send one of them down to sound ; so there we lay in the miserable consciousness of having been foiled in our object on the one hand, and with small prospect of being able to get out to rejoin the frigate on the other. At length, towards seven o'clock, the mist rose ; the unwholesome smell of mud, and slime, and putrifying vegetables was no longer perceptible, and the glorious sun once more shone on the broad expanse of rushing waters. The mangrove-covered banks became again distinctly visible and well-defined, and the horizon seaward began to look blue, clear, and cheery. But all this while the bar was one bow of roaring foam ; that increased as the sea-breeze freshened, and fairly stifled the *terral*, until there was not one solitary narrow streak of blue water in the whole breadth of the river's mouth.

Dick was pacing the deck in no small perplexity I saw, debating in his own mind whether or not he should send below and rouse out Mr Sprawl, when the surgeon passed me.

“ Good morning, doctor.”

He returned the salute.

“ How are all the wounded this morning ? ”

“ All doing well, sir.”

“ And Lennox, how is he ? ”

The doctor laughed.

“ Oh, all right with him now, sir ; but the poor fellow is awfully ashamed at the exhibition his mess-mates have told him he made yesterday. He is much better, however ; and I hope will be out of his hammock this forenoon, if the weather keeps fine.”

I had a sort of anxiety to know, from my own observation, how the poor fellows were getting on ; so I followed our friend, and descended with him in his visit to the sick and hurt.

Almost the first man I spoke to was Lennox.

“ Glad to find you so much better, my man ; I hope you feel yourself stronger this morning ? ”

A faint blush spread over the poor fellow's thin wasted features, and he hesitated in his answer. At length he stammered out—“ Thank you, sir ; I am much better, sir.”

“ Who is that blocking up the hatchway ? ” said the doctor, as some dark body nearly filled the entire aperture.

Presently the half-naked figure of Serjeant Quacco descended the ladder. He paid no attention to me, or any body else ; but spoke to some one on deck in the Eboe tongue, when his wife appeared at the coamings of the hatchway, hugging and fondling the identical and most abominable little graven image we had seen in the fetish hut, as if it had been her child—her

own flesh and blood. She handed it down to the black serjeant, who placed it in a corner, nuzzling, and rubbing his nose all over it, as if he had been propitiating the tiny Moloch by the abjectness of his abasement. I was curious to see how Lennox would take all this, but it produced no effect : he looked with a quizzical expression of countenance at the figure for some time, and then lay back in his hammock, and seemed to be composing himself to sleep. I went on deck, leaving the negro and his sable helpmate below amongst the men, and was conversing with Mr Sprawl, who had by this time made his appearance ; when we were suddenly startled by a loud shriek from the negress, who shot up from below, plunged instantly overboard, and began to swim with great speed towards the shore. She was instantly followed by our friend the serjeant, who for a second or two looked forth after the sable naiad, in an attitude as if the very next moment he would have followed her. I hailed the dingy Venus—“ Come back, my dear—come back.” She turned round with a laughing countenance, but never for a moment hesitated in her shoreward progress.

“ What sall become of me !” screamed Serjeant Quacco.—“ Oh, Lord, I sall lose my wife—debil fetch dem sailor buccra—cost me feefty dallar—Lose my wife !—dat de dam little fetish say mosh be save. Oh, poor debil dat I is !”—and here followed a long tirade in some African dialect, that was utterly unintelligible to us.

“ My good fellow, don’t make such an uproar, will ye ?” said I. “ Leave your wife to her fate : you cannot better yourself if you would die for it.”

"I don't know, massa ; I don't know. Him cost me feefty daller. Beside, as massa must have seen, him beautiful ! oh, very beautiful !—and what you tink dem villain asore will do to him ? Ah, massa, you can't tell what dem will do to him ?"

"Why, my good man, what *will* they do ?"

"Eat him, massa, may be ; for dey look on him as one who now is enemy—dat is, dey call me enemy, and dey know him is my vife—Oh, Lord—feefty daller—all go, de day dem roast my vife."

I could scarcely refrain from laughing ; but on the instant the poor fellow ran up to the old quartermaster, who was standing near the mast, admiring the construction of the canoe,—as beautiful a skiff, by the way, as was ever scooped out of tree. "Help me, old man ; help me to launch de canoe. I must go on sore—I must go on sore."

The seaman looked at me—I nodded ; and, taking the hint, he instantly lent Blackie a hand. The canoe was launched overboard, and the next moment Serjeant Quacco was paddling after his adored, that had cost him fifty dollars, in double-quick time.

He seemed, so far as we could judge, to be rapidly overtaking her, when the little promontory of the creek hid them from our view ; and under the impression that we had seen the last of him, I began to hug myself in the hope of getting over the bar that forenoon. An hour might have elapsed, and all remained quiet, except at the bar, and even there the thunder and hissing of the breakers began to fail. As the tide made, Lanyard saw all ready to go to sea ;

but I was soon persuaded, that, from the extreme heaviness of the ground swell that rolled in, there was no chance of our extricating ourselves until the evening at the soonest, or it might be next morning, when the young ebb would give us a lift ; so we were walking up and down, to while away the time, when poor Lennox, who had by this time come on deck, said, on my addressing him, that he had seen small jets of white smoke rise up from among the green mangroves now and then ; and although he had not heard any report, yet he was persuaded they indicated musket-shots.

“ It may all be as you say, Lennox ; but I hope we shall soon be clear of this accursed river, and then they may blaze away at each other as much as they please.”

The words were scarcely out of my mouth, when we not only saw the smoke, but heard the rattle of musketry, and presently a small black speck shot rapidly beyond the headland or cape, that shut in our view, on the larboard side, up the river.

On its nearer approach, we soon perceived that it was our friend Quacco once more, in his small dory of a canoe, with the little fetish god stuck over the bow ; but there was no appearance of his wife.

As he drew closer to the vessel, the man appeared absolutely frantic. He worked and sculled away with his paddle as if he had been mad ; and when at last he got on deck, having previously cast the little horrible image up before him, he began to curse and to swear, at one moment in the Eboe tongue, at

another in bad Creole English, as if he had been possessed with a devil—

“ *Hoo chockaro, chockaro, soo ho*—Oh, who could tink young weman could hab so mosh deceit!—*Ah, Queykarre tol de rol jig tootle too*—to leave me Quacco, and go join dem Eboe villain!” Then, as if recollecting himself—“ But how I do know dat dem no frighten him for say so? Ah, now I remember one ogly dag stand beside him hab long clear knife in him hand. Oh, Lord! *Tooka, Tooka—Cookery Pee Que*—Ah, poor ting! dem hab decoy him—cheat him into dem power—and to-morrow morning sun will see dem cook him—ay, and eat him. Oh dear, dem will eat my wife—oh, him cost me feefty dallar —eat my feefty dallar—oh *Kickereboo—Rotan*!”

And straightway he cast himself on the deck, and began to yell and roll over and over, as if he had been in the greatest agony. Presently he jumped on his legs again, and ran and laid hold of the little graven image. He caught it up by the legs, and smashed its head down on the hard deck. “ You dam fetish—you false villain, dis what you give me for kill fowl, eh? and tro de blood in you face, eh? and stick fedder in you tail, eh? and put blanket over you shoulder when rain come, and night fog roll over we and make you chilly? What you give me for all dis? You drive me go on board dam footy little Englis cruiser, and give my wife, cost me feefty dallar, to be roast and eat? Oh, Massa Carpenter, do lend me one hax;” and seizing the tool, that had been brought on deck and lay near him, he, at a blow, split open

the fetish's head, and continued to mutilate it, until he was forcibly disarmed by some of the men that stood by him.

After this the poor savage walked doggedly about the deck for a minute or two, as if altogether irresolute what to do; at length he dived suddenly below.

"Breakfast is ready, sir," said the boy who acted the part of steward; and Lanyard, having asked me to accompany him, descended to do the honours to his company—rather a large party, by the way, for the size of the small cabin.

We all made the best use of our time for a quarter of an hour; at length little Binnacle broke ground.

"We have been hearing a curious history of this black fellow, sir."

"What was it? Little good of him you could have heard, I should have thought," quoth Sprawl.

"Why, no great harm either," said young De Walden, who now chimed in, with his low, modest, but beautifully pitched voice—"We have had his story at large, sir, this morning, after the decks were holystoned and washed down."

"Come, Master De Walden, give it us then," said I.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the beautiful boy, "no one can do justice to it but himself."

"Shall I call him, sir?" said Mr Marline.

I looked enquiringly at old Davie Doublepipe, as much as to say, Are those boys quizzing us now? "What say you, Sprawl, eh?"

"Why not, man—why not?" replied my excel-

lent coadjutor. " If it were only to amuse the lads, surely there is no harm in it. But here, give me another cup of coffee,—and, Master Marline, the wing of that spitchcock chicken, if you please—Why, Brail, if nothing else thrives in that most damnable *Sierra Leone*, fowls do."

While the lieutenant was employed in completing his stowage—no regular *Stevedor* could have gone more scientifically about it—little Binnacle ushered in our dark friend. What a change in his outward man! Where he had got his garments heaven knows, but there was the frantic barbarian of half an hour ago, newly and freshly rigged in a clean pair of duck trowsers, canvass shoes, and a good check shirt, with his never-failing black belt slung across his right shoulder, and supporting the rusty bayonet already mentioned. He drew himself up at the door, soldier fashion, and put his hand to his cap. The light from the small scuttle above shone down strong on his tattooed countenance, and lit up his steady bronze-like features. I waited in expectation of his speaking. But the talkative savage of yesterday evening had now subsided into the quiet orderly soldier.

" I say, Serjeant Quacco," at length *quod* Davie Doublepipe, as he finished his ham, and swallowed his last cup of coffee, " we have been hearing from these young gentlemen that you have a story to tell; have you any objections to oblige us with it again?"

This flourish of trumpets was lost on poor Quacco. He stared vacantly, first at one, and then at the other, but remained silent.

"What you tell dem young gentlemen about who you is?" said I.

"Oh," promptly rejoined Serjeant Quacco, "is dat de ting massa dere want to know? I shall tell him over again, if massa choose, but it is one very foolis story."

"Never mind," said I, "let us have it again, by all means."

The poor fellow, after endeavouring to look as serious as possible, and giving sundry hems and haws, and looking unutterable things, as if in doubt whether we were in jest or no, began his story.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SERJEANT QUACCO.

"Gentlemen," began our dark friend, "I tink it very proper dat you read dis certificate before I say more—proper you should be perswade dat I was one person of consequence, before we proceed farder." Whereupon he handed a small flat tin box to Davie Doublepipe.

"Read, Sprawl," said I,—“read.”

The lieutenant took off the lid, and produced a ragged piece of paper, which, after some trouble in deciphering, he found to contain the following words:—

"I certify, that the bearer, Corporal Quacco, late of H.M. — West India regiment, has received his discharge, and a free passage to the coast of Africa, whither he has desired to return, in the first of his Majesty's ships that may touch here, belonging to

that station; in consequence of his gallantry and faithful conduct during the late mutiny, wherein Major D—— unfortunately lost his life." I forget the name and rank of the officer who signed it.

" So you see, gentlemen, dat I is Kin's hofficer same as youselves, although on the retired list. Let me tell what you shall hear now. Twenty year ago, I was catch in de Bonny river, and sold to one nice captain from Livapool. He have large ship, too much people in him—a tousand—no—but heap of people. He was nice man, until him get to sea—was debil den—cram we into leetle, small, dam dirty hole—feed we bad—small time we get to breath de fresh air on deck, and plenty iron on we legs, and clanking chain on we neck, and *fum, fum*—dat is floggee—I sall not say where. But soon we come widin two week of West Indy—ho ! food turn wery much better—we get more air—palm oil sarve out to we, to make we skin plump and nice.

" So, to make one long story short, we arrive at Jamaica, and ten of de best-looking of we"—(here the black serjeant drew himself up)—“ were pick out—select, you call—by one hofficer, and dat day we were marshed to Fort Augusta, to serve his Majesty as soldiers in de grenadier company of de — West India regiment. Long time pass over. We all pick up de Englis language—some better, some worser; for all peoples cannot expect to pronounce him so well as Serjeant Quacco."

" Certainly not," said Sprawl.

" And we drill, drill, drill, every day, and marsh

and countermash, and wheel and halt, until we are quite proficient. I was now one corporal. Cat never touch my back ;—never get dronk—dat is, except I know I can lie in hammock widout neglect my duty until I get sober again. My captain say, I was de best man in de company—and I tink so too myself, so de captain must have been right ; and some good mans were amongst we, gentlemen—ah, and some wery bad ones also.

“ We were, on a certain day, to have great inspection ; so de fag, and work, and drill, become double for some time before we expect de general. De idle dogs say, ‘ What use dis ? we quite perfect ; no white regiment can manœuvre better den we.’ But I say, ‘ Never mind, will soon be over, so rest content.’—‘ Ah,’ say one bitter bad fellow—Ogly Jack, dem call him—not wery genteel name, gentlemen, but can’t help dat—‘ Ah,’ say Jack, ‘ if de rest of de regiment was like me, you should see ! Soon we should have our own way ; and plenty tousand of de poor field-people would soon join us.’—‘ Ho, ho !’ say I, Quacco, ‘ mutiny dis ;—bloody murder and sudden death dis is ;—so, Master Ogly Jack, I shall take de small liberty to wash you.’ However, de inspection pass over ; noting particular happen until de evening, about nine o’clock. De tattoo beat done long time, and I was eating my supper, at de end of de long gallery of de eastermost barrick, wery comfortable ; looking out on de white platform below, where de sentries were walking backward and forward, singing negro song ; de clear arms every now and den spark-

ling bright, cold, and blue, in de moonlight ; and den I look beyond all dis out upon de smoot shining water of de harbour, which stretch away, bright as polished silver, until it end in de lights at Port Royal, and on board of de men of war, at anchor under de batteries dere, dat twinkle and wanish, twinkle and wanish, until de eye rest on de spark at de flag-ship's mizen-peak, dat shone steady as one Venus star. Suddenly I start—‘ What is dat ? ’ I say, for I see canoe steal gently along ; de paddle seem of velvet, for no noise it make, none at all. Presently de parapet hide him, and de two peoples I sees in de canoe, from Quacco’s sight. ‘ How de sentry don’t hail ? ’ say I, Quacco—‘ What it can mean he don’t hail ? ’ again say I. But, just as I tink about de wonder of dis, one loud laugh of de young buccra officer come from de mess-house, and I say, ‘ Ah ha ! de claret begin to work dere—de brandy and water begin to tell ; so I will take my grog too, and turn in.’—‘ Hillo ! ’ I say again ; for just at dis time I hear one footstep behind me ; ‘ who go dere ? ’ No one speak for long time ; but I see one person, wid him head just above de level of de gallery, standing on de stair. I seized my fuzee. ‘ Come up, whoever you is.’—‘ Ha, ha ! ’ laugh some one. ‘ What, broder Quacco, are you afeard ? don’t you know me Jack ? You know we are countrymen : so here I have brought you a drop of grog.’—‘ Oh ho ! ’ say I Quacco, ‘ Jack, is it you ? Come in ; I shall strike a light.’—‘ No, no,’ say Jack ; ‘ I don’t want de oder men to see I am here.’ I tink dis wery strange, but I say noting. All quiet ; de rest of my

company were at de oder side of de barrick, most of dem in der hammock already, and I was not wery fond to be alone wid Jack after what I overhear. Yet de grog was very good. I take anoder pull ; it grew better, so I take one small drop more. ‘ Now, Jack,’ say I, ‘ no offence, but you must know I tought you were leetle better den one big dam rogue ; but I begin to tink’—(here him smile quite pleasant, and give me oder small drop)—‘ dat you are not quite so big willain as I was led to believe ; so shake hands.’ He held out him’s large paw, and say he, ‘ Oh, I know, Quacco, dat some one was prejudice you against me ; but, never mind, I know of some fun going on. Ah, handsome black girls dere, Quacco, and Mundingo Tom, and Yellow-skin Paul, so come along.’—‘ Come along ? ’ say I, Quacco ; ‘ where de debil you want me to go at dis time of night ? De gate all shut ; can’t come.’ Here him laugh loud again. Oh, if dat Ogly Jack had only had white face, I would have tought he was de wery debil himself. ‘ De gate shut ? ’ say he, ‘ to be sure de gate is shut ; but come here, man, come here ;’—and now I was sure he was Obeah man, for I had no power to stay behind—something seem draw me. Massa, you hab all see snake wheedle leetle bird into him jaw, and just so dis dam Jack work on me, Quacco. To be sure de rum was wery good, very good indeed ; so I follow him down stair, and as we pass dat part of de barrick where de grenadier were, we meet two tree men ; but no notice take dem of we ; so we go down to de esplanade. All still dere but de loud ‘ Ha, ha ! ’

from de mess-room, where de band was play, and wax-lights shine. No one else stir, except sentry over de big heap of shell,—one large pile of ten, twelve, thirteen inch shell dat was heap up in de middle of de fort,—so we turn to de left, and ascend de platform. ‘ Who go dere ? ’ sing out de sentry, as him walk backward and forward between de two gun facing we ; ‘ Who go dere ? ’ say he. Jack spring forward to de sentry, and say something. I could not hear what he whisper ; but, though I speak never one word, de man mediate-ly say, ‘ Pass, friend ! ’ and den him stomp away in de oder direction from where we was. Jack now take hold of my hand,—‘ No time for lost ; so come along, broder Quacco.’ I hold me back. ‘ Ah ha ! ’ say I, ‘ show me de cause for all dis, Massa Jack.’ ‘ And so Jack shall,’ him say—‘ but come here, man, come here ;’ and he lead me into de embrasure of one long four-and-twenty ; and taking one good strong rope out of de muzzle of de gun, where him seem to have been stow on purpose, him make one loop in him and hook him over de leetle nose dat stick out from de breech of him behind. ‘ Now, Quacco, I know you is clever fellow ; so warp yourself down by dis rope—dere is no wet ditch here—so down you go, and ’——‘ Gently,’ say I, ‘ where we go to ? —tell a me dat.’—‘ I will,’ say he, ‘ but de night air chill, so here take anoder drop’—and, lord, we have de oder pull at de case bottle. Him puff one long puff after him drink.—‘ I see you suspicious wid me still,’ him say, ‘ but only come de length of de old hut in de cashaw bush dere, and you shall see I is true man.’—Here I stand back

leetle piece to remember myself—but he would give me no time to tink none at all.—‘ You coward fellow, come along,’ say Jack—‘ here go me.’—Wid dat him let himself down by de rope.—‘ Coward ! nay, me is no coward—so here go me Quacco’—and down I slid after him. We reach de bottom. ‘ Now follow me,’ say Jack. Presently we come to de hut in de wood, but many a time I look back to see de glance of de sentry musket before him fire ; but no one so much as hail we—so we walk, or rader run, along de small path, troo de cashaw bushes dat lead to de hut—de moonshine flicker, flicker on de white sandy path, troo de small leaf of de cashaw, no bigger as, and wery like, de leaf of de sensitive plant.—Ah, Massa Brail,—I was smiling here,—“ I know him name—I know de sensitive plant—often get tenpence from young buccra hofficer to hunt him out for him, and, indeed, I know where whole acres of him grow in Jamaica. But you put me out, Massa Brail—where I was ?—oh—de moonshine shine bright and clear, and de lizard whistle *wheetle, wheetle*, and de tree-toad snore, and de wood-cricket chirp, and de beetle moan past we, and de bat whir, and de creech howl squeake—So tink I, I wish I was once more in de barrick—but no help for it. Presently we were in front of de hut. Small black ogly hut him was—no light could be seen in him—at least none shine below de door—and dere was never no window in him none at all. Jack stop, and put him hand to de latch. I lay hold of him arm. I say, ‘ Massa Jack, is dis de hut you speak of, and dis de pleasant peoples I was to see, and

de nice black girls, eh?'—'Stop,' say he, 'don't judge until you see—but come in, man, come in.'—I go in, but Jack was close de door instantly behind him. 'Hilo, what mean you by dat?' say I, 'you go leave me here widout fire?'—'Poo,' say he, 'fire? you shall soon have enough.' Wid dat him strike one light, den light some chip, and presently him tro someting on de fire, dat make it blaze up into one large blue flame dat make every ting look wery disagreab—oh, mosh wery. Jack sit down—he take piece roast pork, some yam, and some salt fis out of de crown of him shako—we eat—de rum bottle soon not heavy too much in de hand—and I forget, sinner dat I is, dat I should hab been in my bed in de barrick in de fort—so Jack, after poke de fire again, say, 'Quacco, broder Quacco; as I say before, we is countrymen—bote Eboe, is we?'—'Yes,' say I, 'we is Eboe, but we were wery different peoples in de Eboe country. You know, Jack, dat I was poor debil whose fader and moder was kill and carry away by dese dam Felatahs and'"

Here friend Dick interrupted the thread of our friend Quacco's tale. "I say, serjeant, you are speaking of Felatahs—we have heard much of them on the coast—who and what are they, my man?"

"I shall tell massa," said Serjeant Quacco. "Dam troublesome fellow dem Felatah—never stay at home—always going about fighting here—stealing dere. You go to bed—hear de pig in de oder end of your hut grunt quite comfortable—you wake—him gone—'ah, Felatah must have been dere.' You hab only two wife, so you go into market—bazar, de Moorish people

call him—you buy anoder leetle wife, because maybe one of de two grow old, and de oder grow stupid maybe ; well, you bring de leetle wife home—nice leetle person—you tell him de story how Felatah come, while you sleep, and tief pig—ha, ha—you laugh, and he laugh, and you drink small piece of tody, after nyam supper, and go worry merry to bed—ho—you wake next morning—debil—him gone too well as de pig—de leetle wife gone—oh, lord—‘ sure as can be, Felatah must be dere.’ And your bag of cowrie never safe—every ting dat cursed Felatah can lay him fist on, him grab—de Livapool ship people call him Scotchman.”

“ Don’t tell that part of your story in the hearing of Corporal Lennox, friend Quacco,” said I, laughing.

He grinned, and proceeded. “ I say to Jack, ‘ I was catch when I was leetle naked fellow by de Felatahs, wid my fader and moder, and carry off to dem country, and afterward sell for slave ; but you was great man always —big fetish priest you was—many fetish you make in your time ; you kill goat and pig before de fetish.’ —‘ Ay,’ said Jack, ‘ and maybe, Quacco, I kill oder ting you no dream of before de fetish, beside dem who hab cloven hoof and four leg and one tail’—and he rose up—on which me Quacco jump on my feet too. ‘ Massa Ogly Jack, I onderstand you now, you wilain ; you is one mutiny, sir, and I arrest you, sir, in de name of de Kin.’ All dis time I was press de tumb of my left hand against de pipe of my bayonet to see dat him was loose in de sheath. Jack again throw someting into de fire, dat dis time flare up wid red flame, not wid blue one as before, when every ting—

de roof, de leetle wildcane bed, de rafter, and whole inside of de hut, de calabash hang against de wall, all look red, red and glowing hot, as if we had plump into de bad place all at once—even Jack, and me Quacco, seem two big lobster. I was very terrible frighten, and drew back to de corner as far as I could get. Jack did not follow me, but continued standing in de same spot where he had risen up, wid both hand stretch out towards me. I try for speak, but my troat stop up, as if you was plug him wid piece of plantain. ‘Quacco,’ at length say Jack wery slow, like one parson, ‘Quacco, you have say I was fetish man, and hab kill goat and pig—and I say I was so; and dat I have in my time make fetish of oder ting dat have no cleft in him hoof, and hab not four leg, nor one tail. Listen to me, Quacco; you is not goat?’—‘No,’ say me Quacco, ‘certainly I is not goat.’—‘You is not pig?’ continue Jack.—‘No, no—Oh! oh! oh!’ groan me Quacco again.—‘You hab not cloven foot?’ him go on to say.—‘No,’ roar I.—‘Nor four leg?’—‘No,’ again me roar, shaking out my two foot for make him see.—‘Nor one tail?’—Here I get mad wid fear, and jump forward wid my drawn bayonet right upon Jack—but, fiz, as if water had been thrown on it, out goes de fire. I nearly stifle wid de smoke, but determined to grapple wid Jack. I tumble all about de hut, but no Jack dere; I try de door—all fast. What shall I do?—he vanish—he must be debil—and I retreat de best way I could, groping along de wall, until I once more get into de corner dat I was leave. ‘Oh, my God!’ say me Quacco, ‘here I sall be mur-

der—or if I be not murder, den I sall be flog for being out of barrick widout leave—Oh, poor me Quacco, poor me Corporal Quacco—oh, to be flog at de triangles would be one comfort, compare wid walk to de hell place in dis fashion!’ ‘Quacco,’ say one voice, it was not Jack voice, ‘Quacco.’—‘Hillo,’ say I, ‘who de debil is you next, eh?’ No hanswer—den I begin to ruminate again. ‘Quacco,’ again de voice say.—‘Hillo,’ again say I, frighten till de sweat hop, hop over my forehead, and den from my chin and de point of my nose,—(“Where may *that* be?” whispered little Binnacle)—“when it drop down on de floor like small bullets. ‘Quacco.’—‘Oh, oh, oh!’ groan I; for dis time it sound as if one dead somebody was speak out of one hollow coffin, lying at de bottom of one new open grave; ‘put you hand at you feet, and see what you catch dere, and eat what you catch dere.’ I did so—I find one calabash, wid boil nyam, and piece salt pork dere; I take him up—taste him—wery good—eat him all—why not? ‘Quacco,’ again say de voice, ‘gropé for de calabash dat hang against de wall.’ I do so—quite heavy—let me see. ‘Drink what in him,’ again say de debil—‘To be sure, Massa Debil,’ say I, ‘why not?’ I taste him—good rum—ah, ah, ah—very good rum, when flash de fire again blaze up right cheery, but I see no one; so I begin to look about, and de first ting I do was to put down my hand where I had replaced, de calabash at my feet. Mercy Heaven! what I lift? One skull, fresh and bloody, of one dead shild, wid some dirt at de bottom, and some fedders, and de shell of one

egg. ‘Oh, oh, oh ! obeah, obeah !’ shout I. And de calabash, what him contain ? I pour out some on de fire—blaze, whatever it was—blaze up in my face and singe my hair, oh, wery mosh—make my head smell like de sheep head de Scotch agitant sarvant boil for him massa dinner on Sunday, when him too sick to dine at de mess. ‘Dis will never do,’ say I Quacco ; ‘let me see what stuff dis can be I was drink ;’ and I pour some on de white bench beside de fire. Oh, mammy Juba—O—O—O—it was blood ! And what is dat small black box I see below de bench ? I capsize him. ‘Debil,’ say I Quacco, ‘what him is ?’ Massa, it was one leetle coffin tree feet long, wid de grave-clothes in him, but green and festering as if de rotting dead picaninny had been new remove. ‘Quacco,’ again say dat terrible voice, ‘what you eat for yam was dirt from your fadder’s grave, Quacco—look at him.’—‘Oh, oh,’ again roar I ; ‘but, good Massa Debil, who go to Africa for him, eh ?’—‘Hold your peace and be dam,’ say de voice ; ‘and what you drink for rum, was your moder’s blood ; so, Quacco, you mosh swear to keep Jack secret, and to help him, and to do whatever him tell you, even if it be to shoot your hofficer.’—Here I go mad altogeder—I dance about de fire—whip, in one second it go out entirely—I jump up and down—de voice still continue to sing out—oder two voice sing out along wid him, ‘Where dem evil spirit can be conceal ?’ say I—‘some one must be on de rafter, couple you call, of de roof above my head calabash, for I can’t find no debil on de floor of de hut, none at all,’ say I ; so I jomp up again, when my head knock against someting.

‘ Oh,’ say somebody. ‘ Ah,’ say me, Quacco. I leap once more, and pike up my naked bayonet before me—It tick in someting—what it was I can’t tell ; it feel as if I had dig him into one rump of beef—large yell instantly shake de entire hut—I jump again—heavy ting fall down on me—I scramble to get away, but one of de debils scramble to hold me down—I turn to de left—I lay hold of de hand of anoder on dem—no doubt de one who was speak. ‘ Ho, ho,’ say I Quacco ; so I make clever slide from between dem. De two debils grapple one anoder—gurgle, gurgle—squeak, squeak—one on dem was strangling de oder. I almost laugh, when some one hit me a heavy blow behind de ear ; I faint away—dead—and—and I remember noting none at all, until I find myself, when still it was dark night, all beat and bruise, and wid swimming head, in my hammock in de barrick at Fort Augusta. I sleep sound till near daybreak, however, when I turn myself, and say, ‘ Hab I Quacco been dronk last night ?’ I tink so ; ‘ Or has all dis been one dream ?’ Maybe. Den I put up my hand to my head, but I never get soch bumps and tumps in one dream before. Dere was only tree oder of our men sleep in dat end of de barrick where I was, de rest being two rooms off, dose between us being under repair ; one on dem was Ogly Jack, and de oder two was de wery dental rascaill I have mention before, Mundingo Tom and Yellow-skin Paul—Dem all tree eider were sound asleep, in dem hammocks, or pretended dey were so—for when I feel de cool damp morning breeze come troo de open window

at one side of de barrick-room and blow clean out at de oder ; and see de morning star twinkle bright and clear in de red east, and de pale-faced buccra moon, just sinking behind de brushwood on Hellshire Point, troo de window opposite, I turn myshef again in my hammock, and listen to de roar of de surf in de distance, and rub my eyes again, and say ‘ it not morning yet.’—But presently de trute push himself into my eye, and I say ‘ It is daybroke, and sore or sound, up must I Quacco get.’ Just under de window, by dis time, I was hear some low grumbling voices, and coughs, and loud yawns ; den I hear hollow tumbling sounds like when drum is place on de ground ; den more grumbles, and coughs, and yawns ; den de squeaking of de drum braces, as de leetle drummer pull dem tight, and de tootletoo of de fifer, as dem get all ready. At length Old Spearpoint, de drum-major, sing out wery gruff, ‘ fall in, music,’ and next minute roll went de drum, squeak went de fife ; roll went de drum, sque-a-eak went de fife very shrill ; roll went de drum de tird time, and sque-a-eak went de fife, very too dam shril dis last time ; and away dem stamp rum dum dum round de barrick-yard wid dere reveillie. We all tumble out, and fall in on parade—still dark—we stand to our arms, de moon go down, but de morning star glance cold and clear on de bayonet and bright barrels of de guns—de great Duke no was brown de barrel den, God bless him. Search arms,’ de sergeant say. We do so—half pace to de right—so in dat position I see well what Ogly Jack, who was my rear rank man, was do.

De serjeant approach me—I send down my steel ramrod wid one bang—he shomp up wid a loud ring one foot out of my musket—it really surprise me how far de ramrod shomp, as I send him home wid scarcely no strength none at all. ‘ Ha, no for noting my ramrod shomp so, someting past common here,’ say I to myshef—de next man to me in de front rank was Yellow-skin Paul, and de next man to Ogly Jack was Mundingo Tom. As me Quacco was de right hand man of de front rank of de grenadiers, so Jack was de right hand man of de rear rank—well, Yellow-skin Paul make believe dat him send him ramrod home, but I notice he catch him between his finger and tumb, so as he never reach de bottom. ‘ Ho, ho,’ tink I to myself, ‘ who shall say dat gun no load !’ I keep quite still—de serjeant by and by come to Jack—he catch de ramrod same way, and de serjeant being half asleep, eider did not notice dis, or him tought noting about it. Presently he desire Mundingo Tom to search arms—he bang his ramrod down I saw, wid design to catch him like de oders, but in his hurry it slipt troo his fingers, and go home *thud*. ‘ Ho, ho,’ say I again to myself, ‘ dis piece is also load’—What was to be do ?—de serjeant notice dis one—‘ dat firelock is load, you scoundril.’—‘ No,’ say Mundingo Tom, ‘ but I leave some tow in him, beg pardon, massa serjeant.’—‘ You dem rascail,’ say de jeant, ‘ you never is better, you lazy dog—fall out, sir, and draw de’ ——‘ Attention,’ call out de agitant at dis moment; ‘ de left wheel into line—marsh’—tramp, tramp, tramp, whir—de line is form. ‘ Stand at ease

—A serjeant from each company for blank cartridges.' So away step de serjeant, who had given Mundingo Tom a rating, and I take de opportunity of whisper Jack—'I say, Jack, what is in de wind? I have great mind to peach my sospicion.' He say nosing; and den I say, 'Poo, all my fear must be nonsense—all must be a dream'—de serjeant return—serve out eight round of blank cartridge—'attention' again. 'De line will wheel into open column of companies, right in front—on you left backwards wheel—halt, dress.' De hofficer was now all on parade, and stood in a group in front—de agitant mount him horse—Major D—appear at de door of him house—one orderly hold him horse—him mount and ride up to de hofficer. 'Gentlemen, fall in—form subdivisions—quick march'—rum, dum, dum, dum, again, and away we march out to de *glacis* of de fort—den we form, and much manœuvre we was perform—oh very brilliant, 'wid cartridge, prime, and load.' 'De regiment will fire by companies from right to left'—short tap on de drum—de hofficer commanding companies fall back two pace—ready, present, fire—blaze go de grenadier—I prick my ear, and cock my eye. Ogly Jack, my covering file, was not fire—I know, because de moment I pull de trigger, I clap my right cheek down on de barrel of de musket as he was level—all cold iron—'Ha, ha,' say I to myself, and while loading, I glance my eye at Yellow-skin Paul's firelock, who was next me, and also at Mundingo Tom's, who was next Jack, bote on dem were half cock. So 'Ha, ha,' say me Quacco again, but before I could

determine in my own mind what I should do, de word was given—‘ De regiment will fire one volley direct to de front.—Ready—present—fire,’—roar went de musketry—all smoke for small space—we remain at de present—wait long time for de major give de word ‘ Come to de recover,’—no one speak—all of we remain wid our piece level—oh ! one attitude wery tiresome. Still no one speak. At length I hear our captain, one wery nice man, grumble to himself—‘ Why, what *can* be amiss wid de old major ?’—dat moment de smoke, by de setting in of de sea-breeze, was blow off. What shall we see?—Why, Major D—— was lying on him horse’s neck, widin ten yard of de grenadier company. ‘ Ah !’ say for we captain —‘ he must be in one fit’—when down de major drop —and away scamper de horse—de captain run up, and turn de old man on him back, and take off him stock, and open him jacket. ‘ Ah !’ cry he—‘ mutiny, gentlemen, mutiny ; de major is shot dead. Secure de magazine ; call out de artillery.’ Den one loud buz buz pass along de line—de hofficer voice was heard—‘ Men, if you move one step I will cut you down by G—d.’ Anoder say—‘ Stand to your arms, men ; if one of you, stir, I will run him troo.’ ‘ Who is de villain ?—who is de villain ?’ shout some one else. Someting come over me—I rush out five pace —order my fusee, and touch my cap—wery graceful—so—[suiting the action to the word]—‘ Captain, and gentlemen—dere are de mutineers.’—‘ Where ?’—‘ Dere.’—‘ Name dem,’ say one.—‘ I will,’ say me Quacco—‘ Ogly Jack, Mundingo Tom, and Yellow-

skin Paul.' Dey were all immediately secure—and marshed to de front;—dem say noting—not one word. I look at dem—all tree cool and collected. ' May be,' tink I, ' dere will have be some mistake; if so, all people will tink I mosh have been de mutineer, murserer you call, and dat to shave myself I was peach on dem.' My heart sink when de agitant seize me by de shoulder. ' My fine fellow, you make mosh noise—we shall see what you are make of very shortly yourself.—Here, secure Corporal Quacco.' By dis time we were again marching into de fort—de gate was shut—four field piece nine pounder, manned by white artillerymen, and load wid grape, were pointed so as to enfilade us as we were formed in close column, and my tree friend, and myself, were instantly brought to one drum-head court-martial.— Some young hofficer say, ' Oh, hang him all—hang him all.'—' Please not, young gentleman, if de same ting to you,' say I.—' No hurry,' say I.—' I am willing to be hang if dese tree willains are not de men. Secure dem hands'—dis was done. ' Now,' say I, ' we were all sarve wid eight blank cartridge—look at dem muskets—plain dey all have been fire.'—' What has all dis to do wid it?' say de agitant.—' Mosh,' say I, ' mosh—now see how many cartridge each on dem hab.'—' Ha, ha,' say my captain,—' Quacco is right.—*Dem all tree hab each de eight cartridge untouched, yet it quite evident dey all hab fired.*'—' What say you, ye scoundrels,' again say de captain—' what say you why you should not be hang immedately?' Dem would not speak one word—den I tell all I hear

—and so dem try, find guilty, and were hang—and I as one reward got my discharge.” (Here our friend made a long pause—at length he continued.) “ Why I take him—I can’t tell—and still more, why I leave dear Jamaica, where de governor hoffer me ground to grow nyam in, and house—and as for wife, I hab several. What de debil was possess me to leave my pig, and wives, and allowance—pension you call him,—and take into my head for come here again?—Heaven know—I Quacco do not.—Here—where one can scarcely breathe for stinking mud, and every night brings dangers wid it, and you never can tell whidder de next morning shall not see you carried away into slavery, or may be sacrificed before one fetish; or who know dat he shall not, some fine forenoon, be roast or grill, and eaten like one monkey. Oh, I wish I was back again.”

“ But,” said Sprawl, “ you seem to have left off as corporal—when became you serjeant?”

Quacco laughed, “ By brevet, my good sir—by bre”—

“ A gun—Sir Oliver speaking to us in the offing.”

“ Hurrah for Old Gazelle once more!” shouted Sprawl, in a voice like thunder.

“ Out of my way, friend Quacco,” cried I.

“ Room if you please, old Daddy Longyarn,” quoth master Lanyard. And to the great dismay of poor Quacco, who little expected to have been so suddenly and unceremoniously swept aside, we all tumbled on deck as fast as our legs could carry us.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FETISH—CROSSING THE BAR, AND DESTRUCTION OF THE SLAVER.

THE first man we encountered was Clinker, the master-at-arms.

“ Who has seen the frigate ? ” said Lanyard.

“ Why, there she is, sir,” replied the man. “ There, you see her topgallant sails over the green bushes there, sir. Now you see the heads of her fore and maintopsails.”

“ I see, I see. What signal is that flying at the fore, Mr Marline ? ” to the midshipman who was looking out.

“ The signal to close, sir.”

“ Close,” croaked old Sprawl—“ close—easier said than done, Sir Oliver.”

“ Like the Starling, ‘ we can’t get out,’ ” quoth I.

Here the frigate in the offing slowly and majestically shoved her long jib-boom past the mangroves on the westernmost bank, and gradually the whole beautiful machine hove in sight, rising and falling on the long swell.

As she came round the point, she took in topgal-

lant sails, and hauled down the foretopmast staysail ; and whenever she had fairly opened the river, and come nearly abreast of us, she laid her maintopsail to the mast, with her fore and mainsails hanging in graceful festoons in the brails, and hove-to under her three topsails, jib, and spanker. She slid silently and majestically along ; the bright green wave curling outwards from her beautifully moulded bows, like the shell-shaped canopy of Daddy Neptune's car, as the cut-water slid gently through the calm heaving of the blue swell, and gradually subsiding, as the glorious old hooker lost her way, and became stationary, when she floated, like a swan asleep on the dark waters, the bright sun shining cheerily on her white sails and hammocks and clear white streak, and sparkling on her glittering sides, as they rose and fell fresh and wet from the embraces of old Ocean ; and as the land-breeze laid her over, her gold-bright copper blazed like one vast polished mirror, wherein the burning sun was reflected in dazzling glances. Bright blinding rays flashed out, starlike, from the window in the quarter gallery, and the glass in the scuttles of the officer's cabins, and from every burnished piece of metal throughout the whole length of the gallant craft, converting her black hull into a brilliant constellation ; while her heavy lower masts, with their strong shrouds and stays, and the swelling sails, and the tall and taper spars aloft, were seen clear and distinct against the deep blue of the seaward horizon.

As we looked, the frigate hauled down the jib, and

brailed up the spanker. A string of small round bundles, apparently each about the size of a man's head, now twisted and struggled, and stopped, and finally slid up to the main royal-mast-head. The instant the uppermost reached the truck, as if it had touched a spring—bang—a gun was fired, and at the same moment the round balls blew out steadily in so many flags.

“ What signal now, Mr Marline ?”

“ The signal to weigh and stand out, sir.”

“ Why, we can't ; it is impossible : although the wind is fair, the swell on the bar puts it out of our power.”

“ Very true,” said old Pumpbolt ; “ and you had better say so, Lanyard. I, for one, won't undertake to carry you over until there is less broken water at the river's mouth, I know.”

The lieutenant commanding the felucca telegraphed to this effect ; the frigate acknowledged it, and answered, that she would remain in the offing all night in expectation of our getting over at high water, when possibly there would be less sea on the bar.

Having made this signal, she run her jib up, set topgallant-sails, and let fall the foresail : the ponderous mainyard slowly swung round, and as the noble frigate fetched way again, she gradually fell off before the wind ; her long low hull fore-shortened into a mere tub of a vessel to look at, and finally presenting her stern to us, she lay over, inclining herself gracefully to the breeze, as if she was bidding us farewell,

and glided cheerily away ; indicating by the increasing whiteness of her wake, the accelerated speed with which she clove the heaving billows.

“ There goes the dear old beauty,” said Davie ; “ there’s a retiring curtsy for you that beats the stateliest of my lady patronesses at Almacks.”

Having gained an offing of about three miles, she again shortened sail, and hove to in her station to await our joining, when the bar became passable in the night.

“ Weary work, master Benjie,—weary work,” said Davie Doublepipe ; “ so here we must lie, roasting another whole day, while there is plenty of water on the bar, if that confounded swell would only fall.”

By this it was drawing near the men’s dinner-time ; and while the lieutenant and I were pacing the deck, rather disconsolately, trying to steer clear of the smoke of the galley, that streamed aft as we rode head to wind, we noticed that our sable visitor, Serjeant Quacco, had, with the true spirit of resignation, declined into cook’s mate (indeed, if there be a Negro on board when this birth becomes vacant, he invariably slides into it, as naturally as a snail into his shell), and was busy in assisting the maimed seaman who was watching the coppers. The fire seemed to burn very indifferently from the greenness of the wood, which gave out more smoke than flame.

“ Drainings, my man,” said Lanyard to cookey, “ don’t choke us, if you please. Do get some dry chips from Shavings, will you ? ”

“ Ay, ay, sir,” said the man.

“Here, Quacco, mind the fire,” continued Drainings, “till I get some splinters from forward there.—Stay—Lennox, my dear boy, do get me a handful of dry chips from old Shavings, will ye?”

The Scotch corporal civilly complied; and after a little, we saw him split up a block of wood where the carpenter had been at work in the bows of the felucca, and presently he returned with a bundle of them, which Serjeant Quacco busily employed himself in poking into the fire, blowing lustily with his blubber lips all the while. When Lennox turned away, I could not help noticing, that he stuck his tongue in his cheek, and winked to one of the crew as he went below.

Presently Lanyard desired the boatswain to pipe to dinner. In place of bundling down below, according to the etiquette of the service in larger vessels, he winked, I saw, at the poor fellows breaking away forward into messes, which they contrived to screen from the view of the quarterdeck, by slewing the long yard nearly athwart ships, and loosing the sail as if to dry.

Notwithstanding all this, we could easily see what was going on forward. Close to, sat the old cook himself, with Shavings the carpenter, and Wadding the gunner, warrant officers in a small way, with a little snipe of a boy waiting on them.

About a fathom from them, there was another group squatted on the deck, consisting of Corporal Lennox, old Clinker the master at arms, Dogvane the quartermaster, and no smaller a personage than Serjeant Quacco.

The food was peas-soup, and salt junk and biscuit. The hands, as we turned and returned, seemed exceedingly comfortable and happy ; when all at once, the old cook pressed his hands on the pit of his stomach, and began to make a variety of rather odd grimaces. Dogvane looked in his face, and instantly seemed to catch the infection ; so he next began to screw himself up into a variety of indescribable contortions. Serjeant Quacco looked first at one, and then at another, as they groaned in any thing but a melodious concert, until he too, through sympathy, or in reality from pain, began also to twist himself about, and to make such hideous faces, that to have trusted him near a respectable pig in the family way, would have been as much as the nine farrow were worth.

At length the contagion became general apparently, and Corporal Lennox began to groan and wince, as he ejaculated, “ Oh dear, what can this be ! what an awful pain in my stomach ! Why, Mr Drainings, what *have* you clapt into that peas-soup ? *Something bye common* you must have put into it, for we are all dying here with ” —

“ My eye ! ” said old Drainings, speaking slowly and deliberately, as if the paroxysm had subsided, and some strange light had suddenly flashed on him, “ you are quite right, Lennox. That same peas-soup is none of the right sort—that *is* clear now. I have just been telling Mr Wadding that a wery-most-remarkable circumstance took place in the boiling on’t.”

Here the old fellow, who had just finished his peas-soup, very solemnly looked upwards, and wiped his

muzzle with what hovered between a pocket-handkerchief and a dishclout, of any colour but that of un-sunned snow.

“ Why,” continued the cook, “ just when it began to simmer about the edges of the boiler—Ah—ah—oh—there it is again—there it is again,” and once more he began to tumble about on the deck, giving friend Quacco several miscellaneous kicks and punches during his make-believe involuntary convulsions. This fit seemed also to pass over.

“ Why,” said he, “ just when the soup began to simmer about the edges of the copper, and thin streaks of white froth began to shoot inwards towards the middle, where the hot soup was whirling round in a bubbling eddy, and popping up for all the world like the sea on the bar there, I saw—I saw”—Here he looked unutterable things with his one eye, turning it up like a duck in thunder.

“ What did you see ? ” said old Clinker, staring in his face with sham earnestness.

“ I saw—so sure as I see Mr Weevil the purser’s d—d ugly mug aft on the quarterdeck there—a small devil rise out of the boiling peas-soup in the very middle of the copper, and fly up and away over the truck like a shot—whipping the vane at the mast-head off its spindle with the bight of his tail.

“ No ! did you though ? ” said several voices.

“ To be sure I did,” rejoined Drainings, “ as distinctly as I now see my thumb—none of the cleanest, by the way.”

"The devil?" said Lennox, starting up; "what was it like, Mr Drainings?"

"Why, as like the little heathen god brought on board by Quacco there, as you can fancy any thing."

"Oh—oh—oh," again resounded from all hands.

"But it could not be he," at length struck in the black serjeant. "It could not be he, seeing he is safe stow below de heel of de bowsprit dere."

"Heaven grant it may be so," whined Dogvane.

"If it really be as Quacco says," said Wadding, in a sympathizing tone, "why, *then*, I will believe it is all fancy—all a bam."

Here the black serjeant, in great tribulation, rose to go forward, evidently with a desire to reconnoitre whether the graven image was really there in the body or no. After a long search, he came back and sat down, blank and stupified, on the spot where he had risen from.

"And pray, Mr Drainings, when did you see this curious appearance?" persisted Lennox.

"At the wery instant of time," drawled Cookey, with his arms crossed, and his hands stuck into the open bosom of his greasy shirt, that had once been red flannel, and with a short black stump of a pipe in his mouth, from which he puffed out a cloud between every word, "at the wery instant of time, by the glass, that Serjeant Quacco there mended the fire."

"Oh—oh—oh!"—Here all hands of the rogues who were in the secret, began again to roll about and grimace, as if a travelling *menagerie* of baboons had suddenly burst, and capsized its inmates all about.

Quacco all this while was twisting and turning himself, and, although evidently in a deuced quandary, trying to laugh the affair off as a joke.

"Well," at length said he, "I don't believe in fetish—now dat I is among whiteman Christian. So I will tank you, Massa Drainings, to hand me over my chocolate."

But I noticed that the devil a drop would he take into his mouth, although he made believe to drink it. The jest went on—at length there was a calm, when who should again break ground but Serjeant Quacco—who made a last attempt to laugh off the whole affair

"But where de debil *can* he be?" said he, almost involuntarily—"gone, sure enough."

"Oh—oh—oh—" sung out all hands once more, with their fists stuck into their midriffs.

"Oh, that vile fetish," screamed Lennox; "we must all be bewitched—Quacco, we are all bewitched."

"Bewitch!" responded the black serjeant, jumping off the deck, and now at his wit's end; "and I believe it is so. I hab pain in my tomak too—just dis moment—oh, very sharp!"

"Confound your fetish," groaned the old cook; "it was just as you stuck those chips of cedarwood into the fire—precisely at the wery moment I snuffed the delicious smell of them, that I saw the devil himself first put his ugly fiz up in the middle of the pea-soup, and gibber, and twinkle his eyes, and say"—

"Say!" shouted Lennox—"why did he really and truly speak, Mr Drainings?"

" Speak!" responded he of the slush bucket—" speak ! ay, as plain as I do now."

" And what said he?" quoth Dogvane.

" Why, just as he shook off the spray from the barb at the end of his tail, says he,—‘ Damme, I’m off,’ says he."

" Oh, oh, oh ! I am pinned through my ground tier with a harpoon," groaned Drainings.

" Where, in the devil’s name, since we have seen him, got you those cedar chips, Quacco ?" yelled old Clinker.

A light seemed to break in on the poor serjeant’s bewildered mind. " Chip, chip !—where I get dem chip ?" Here the poor fellow gave an idiotic laugh, as if he had been all abroad. " I get dem from Corporal Lennox, to be sure,"—and he turned his eyes with the most intense earnestness towards the marine, who was rolling about the deck over and over.

" Where got I the chips, did you ask, Quacco ? Oh, oh, oh !—Why, Heaven forgive me—but I am punished for it now—they are the very splinters of your fetish, that you brought on board !"

Up started the black resetter as if bit by a rattle-snake, dancing and jumping. " Oh, my tomack, oh, my tomack !—de fetish have get into my tomack—de leetle debil in a my tomack. Oh, doctor, doctor !—one evil spirit in me—oh, doctor, someting to make him fly—someting to get him out ! Doctor, de debil in a my belly—physic—physic, doctor ; de strongerer de more betterer. Oh Lord !" And

away he tumbled down the fore-hatchway, roaring for Esculapius like a perfect bull of Bashan.

While we were laughing at this to our heart's content, Mr Marline came aft to us. “ There are a good many dark specks passing and repassing above us in the furthermost reach of the river, yonder, sir—as far as you can see there, sir. Will you please to look at them, Mr Sprawl ? ”

Sprawl took a long squint first, and then handed the glass to me. I peered, and peered. The glorious stream was rolling down like a shining flow of quicksilver ; but although all continued quiet in our vicinity, yet, where it narrowed nearly to a bright point in the distance above, I could perceive a tiny dark object slowly descend the river, and send up a thick cloud of smoke, after which it remained stationary, while a number of small black spots were seen cruising hither and thither all around it.

Sprawl had also noticed this. “ Why, Brail, those gentry seem mustering in some strength. There cannot be many fewer than a hundred canoes paddling about there. What say you ? ”

It was now near three, P.M., and we were bethinking ourselves of going to dinner, when a perfect cloud of the dark specks, fifty at the least, began to drop down with the ebb in a solid phalanx, looking in the distance like a compact black raft of wood. Presently they sheered off right and left ; and although the craft from which we had seen the smoke arise, still remained at anchor in the stream, the attendant

canoes vanished, one and all, amongst the mangroves, on either bank. “Poo—nonsense!” said Dick Lan-yard. “Come along, Sprawl—come along. Why, man, we shall get as thin as whipping-posts, if we allow these barbarian demonstrations to interfere with our comforts.”

“You may be right, my boy—you may be right,” said old Davie; but he appeared to have some strange misgivings.

However, we went to dinner; the reefers were all with us, little Joe Peake among the rest, who was now quite recovered from the thump he had got on shore, and old Pumpbolt; and we were in the very middle of it, when down came Wadding, the gunner.—“Beg pardon, sir,” said the old seaman, sidling in, and trying to appear at his ease, although he was very far from that same. “Beg pardon—but them chaps are coming more nearer, sir, than seems quite convenient,—they are fast dropping down with the afternoon’s ebb, sir.”

“Indeed!” said old Sprawl. “We must keep a bright look-out here, Brail, at any rate.”

We went on deck, and the report was literally true; but although the mass above us continued to increase until the whole surface of the river in the distance seemed swarming, as one has seen a pool with those blue water-insects which, I believe, as boys, we used to call sailors, still there was no warlike demonstra-tion made, beyond the occasional descent of a fast-pulling canoe now and then, a mile or so below the main body. But they were always very easily satis-

fied in their reconnoitring, so far as we could judge, for the whole of them kept a wary distance.

We returned to the cabin for half an hour, and having finished off with a caulkier of good cogniac, all hands of us once more came on deck.

It was now half-past four, and low water as near as could be. The bar astern of us—by this time the breeze having taken off, we were riding to the ebb—was one roaring ledge of white breakers ; but it was smooth water where we lay, the fall of the tide having completely broken the heave of the heavy swell that rolled in from the offing on the bar. The clouds had risen over the land, some large drops of rain fell, and altogether we had strong prognostications of a wet, if not a tempestuous evening.

The declining sun, however, was yet shining brightly ; and although, calculating on the average at this season hereabouts, one might have made himself almost sure of a fine evening, yet the present was an exception, and we had every appearance of a thunder-storm.

All nature seemed hushed ; the thick clouds that arose in the east, sailed along on the usual current of the trade-wind with their edges as well defined as if it had been a dark screen gradually shoving up and across the arch of the blue empyrean ; this gloomy canopy crept on and on, and as it overlapped us and stole down the western horizon, every thing assumed a deep dusky purple hue.

In the sudden darkness, the fires glanced bright and red on board of three war-canoes, that had now

been suddenly advanced down the river in the shape of a triangle, the headmost being within a mile of us. Presently, the sable curtain descended within a very few degrees of the western horizon, until there was only a small streak of bright golden sky between it and the line of the land ; in the centre of which the glorious sun, now near his setting, shot his level beams of blood-red light over the river and its banks, and the trees that grew on them, gilding the dark sides of the canoes ; and as he sank, his last rays flashed up into the black arch overhead, until the dark masses of cloud glowed like crimson.

This soon faded—the clouds gradually sinking in the west, until, as if their scope had been expended, they *lifted* from the eastern horizon majestically slow—like a magnificent curtain drawn up in order to disclose the glorious moon, which now, preceded by her gemlike forerunner the evening star, that sparkled bright and clear on the fringe of the ascending cloud, rose above the low swampy banks, like a diamond on the skirt of a sable velvet mantle.

Her disk, when she first appeared, was red and dim, until she attained a considerable altitude, when, having struggled through the pestilential effluvia that hovered over the river, she began to sail through her liquid track in all her splendour—pale, but oh, how crystal clear!—driving, like a queen, the dark vapours before her.

As the night wore on, the congregation of canoes became thicker, and presently something like a raft

floated down to within three quarters of a mile of us, accompanied by five large boats, full of people.

It was clearly distinguishable, from a bright halo of luminous smoke that hovered over it, proceeding from a fire that every now and then blazed up on board. By the time the raft was anchored, the evening breeze came strong down the river, wafting towards us the sounds of African drums, blended with dismal yells, as of captives, and loud fierce shouts.

I directed my glass towards the flame, that was flashing fitfully, as if tar or rosin, or some other equally inflammable substance, had been suddenly cast into it.

“ What can that be ? ” said I, to young De Walden, who was also spying away at the same object, close to where I stood.

“ Really,” said the very handsome boy, “ I cannot well tell, but I will call Serjeant Quacco, sir. He knows all the practices of the savages hereabouts.”

“ No, no,” rejoined I ; “ never mind—never mind ; but what *can* they be doing there on the raft ? I see two uprights about five feet asunder, and judging from the dusky figures that are cruising about them, and the fire that is kindled beneath, as it were between them, they should be about eight feet high above the raft on which they are rigged. What *are* they after now ? Two fellows sitting on men’s shoulders, are fixing a cross piece, or transom, on the top of the uprights—now they are lashing it to them tightly with some sort of rope—ah, they descend, and the fire seems to have gone out, for every thing is dark again.”

All in the neighbourhood of the raft was now undistinguishable, but small red fires began to burn steadily in the three advanced canoes.

"What next?" said Sprawl.

"Oh, I suppose, having set their piquets for the night, we are safe." And I took the glass from my eye, and banged the joints of it one into another, when De Walden spoke.

"Please look again, sir—please look again." I did so. The gibbet sort of erection that I had been inspecting, was now lit up by a sudden glare of bright crimson flame. The dark figures, and the bows and sides of the attendant canoes, and the beams of the gallows-looking machine itself, were all tinged with a blood-red light, and presently the sound of the Eboe drums and flutes was borne down on the night-wind with startling distinctness, and louder than before, drowning the snoring of the toads, and *chir-chir-chir-ring*, and *wheetle-wheetling* of the numberless noisy insects that floated off from the bank on either side of us.

"What is that—do you see that, Master de Walden?" said I, as a dark struggling figure seemed to be transferred by force from one of the canoes that showed a light into a smaller one. De Walden could not tell—and the small skiff into which, whatever it was, it had been transhipped, gradually slid away, apparently in the direction of the raft, into the impervious darkness that brooded over the river, above the three advanced canoes with the watch-fires.

I was about resigning the glass once more, when I

noticed the raft again suddenly illuminated, and a great bustle among the people on board. Presently a naked human being was dragged under the gallows, and one arm immediately hoisted up, and fastened by cords to one of the angles—a black figure, who had perched himself astride on the cross beam, evincing great activity on the occasion.

For some purpose that I could not divine, the fire was now carried by a group of savages from the foremost part of the raft, that is, from the end of it next us, to the opposite extremity beyond the gibbet, the immediate effect of which was to throw off the latter, and the figure suspended on it, as well as the persons of the people who crowded round, in high relief against the illuminated night damps lit up by the fire, that hung as a bright curtain or background beyond it. In a few seconds, the other arm was drawn up to the opposite corner: and—my blood curdles as I write it—we could now make out that a fellow-creature was suspended by the wrists from the corners of the gibbet, directly under the centre of the beam, as if the sufferer had been stretched on the cross.

The fire increased in intenseness—the noise of the long drums, and the yells of the negroes, came down stronger and stronger; and although I could notice two assistants holding the legs of the suspended figure, yet its struggles seemed to be superhuman, and once or twice I said to young De Walden, “Heaven help me—did you hear nothing?”

“Nothing particular, sir, beyond the infernal howling and drum-beating of these monsters.”

A pause—then another terrible convulsion of the suspended victim, as it struggled to and fro with the dark figures that clung to its lower limbs like demons.

“ There—heard you nothing now ? ”

“ Yes, sir—oh, yes,” gasped my young ally—“ such a yell ! ”

“ Oh, may my ears never tingle to such another ! ” groaned I ; and as I spoke, the assistants let go their hold on the suspended victim, when—Heaven have mercy on us ! horror on horror—one of the lower limbs had been extracted, or cut out from the socket at the hip joint. The struggles of the mutilated carcass continued. Quacco, hearing his name mentioned by the young midshipman, was now alongside of me. I handed him the glass, which it was some time before he could manage. At length, having got the focus, he took a long, long look—he held his breath.

“ What is it ? ” said I, “ what dreadful scene is this ? For Heaven’s sake, serjeant, tell me what is going on yonder ? ”

He puffed out his breath like a porpoise, and then answered me as coolly as possible, as if it had been no strange sight to him. “ Fetish, massa—grand fetish dem make—such fetish as dem make before dem go fight wid one enemy.”

“ But what was the figure we saw hoisted up on the gibbet-looking apparatus just now ? ” said I.

“ Can’t tell,” rejoined Quacco, “ can’t really tell, massa ; at first I taught it was man—but dat cry—so very bitter and sharp like one knife—no, I tink it must have been woman.”

“ Almighty powers ! Do you mean to say that the figure hung up between us and the fire is really and truly a human being ?”

“ I do,” said Serjeant Quacco, with the same *sang froid* ; “ I do, massa. What you tink it was ?”

I could not tell—I thought at one moment it was a fellow-creature, and at another that it must be impossible, notwithstanding all the hideous tales I had heard of the doings on this coast ; but the truth, the horrible truth could no longer be concealed.

“ It is only one man or woman prisoner dat dem are cutting in pieces, and trowing into de river.” Here I saw with my glass that the other leg of the victim had been severed from the trunk. “ But I sall tell you, dat dem intend to attack you dis wery night.”

I heard him, but was riveted to my telescope. All struggles had ceased in the dark and maimed carcass, and presently one of the arms was cut away at the shoulder, when the bloody limb fell against the post on one side, and the mangled trunk banged against the upright on the other, and swung round and round it, making the whole engine reel ; while, as the drums and shouts grew louder and louder, the other arm was also cut off at the elbow, and down came the mutilated trunk of the sacrifice into the middle of the fire, which for a moment blazed up, and shot forth showers of sparks and bright smoke, then rapidly declined, and in half a minute it was entirely extinguished.

The fires in the advanced boats were now all put out, and nothing evinced the neighbourhood of our dangerous enemy ; while the lovely moon once more

looked forth on us, her silver orb reflected on the arrowy streams of the dark river, in a long trembling wake of sparkling ripples, and all was as quiet as if she had been smiling on a scene of peace and gentleness.

To what peculiarity in my moral composition it was to be attributed I do not know, but the change from the infernal scene we had just witnessed to the heavenly quietude of a lovely night had an instantaneous, almost an electrical effect on me ; and, wounded and ill at heart as I was, I could not help looking up, out and away from my grovelling condition, until in fancy I forgot my miserable whereabouts, and only saw the deep blue heaven, and its countless stars, and the chaste moon.

" Hillo, Benjie Brail," shouted friend Davie— " where away, my lad ? Come back to mother earth " — (" *alma mater tellus,*" said a voice near me—Corporal Lennox for a thousand, thought I)— " my dear boy, the bright sky overhead, that *I* make no doubt you are apostrophising so poetically, will soon be shrouded by that brooding mist there—never doubt me."

He augured rightly ; for, in a little, a thick haze did in very deed begin to mantle over the water, and continued to increase until the glorious planet and bright stars were again obscured, and you could scarcely see the length of the felucca.

Quacco's hint, however, was by no means thrown away on us ; we immediately saw all clear to give our savage neighbours a warm reception, should they venture down under cover of the fog.

We had been some time at quarters, the boats astern

having been hauled up alongside, lest, in the fog, some of the canoes might venture near enough to cut the painters. But every thing continued so quiet and still, that we were beginning to consider our warlike preparations might not altogether have been called for.

“ I say, Sprawl,” said I—“ Poo, these poor creatures will not venture down on us; especially after the lesson they had yesterday?”

“ Don’t trust to that, Brail, my good boy,” said Davie.

“ No, massa, don’t you trust to dat, as Massa Prawl say,” quoth Quacco.—“ I know someting—ah, you shall see.” Here the poor fellow crept close up to Dick Lanyard, “ Captain—if you love sleep in one skin hab no hole in him—if, massa, you walue de life of dem sailor intrust to you—ill-bred fellow as dem may be,—let no one—no—not so mosh as de leetle dirty cook-boy—shut him eyelid until to-morrow sun melt de fog, and”—

Something dropped at my foot, with a splintering sort of sound, as if you had cast a long dry reed on the deck. “ What is that?” said I.

“ Will you be convince now?” said Quacco, slowly and solemnly. “ Will Massa Brail,”—turning to me, and handing a slender wand, about ten feet long,—“ will good Massa Brail be convin”—

Spin—another arrow-like affair quivered in the mast close beside us. It had passed sheer between the first lieutenant and me.

“ Ah, ah, ah!” exclaimed Quacco in a mighty

great quandary—"dere is anoder—anoder spear—mind, gentlemen—mind, gentlemen, mind, or a whole fleet of war-canoe will be aboard of you before you can look round."

"Men!" shouted Lanyard, "keep a bright lookout; there are native canoes cruising all about us, and close to, in the thick mist there. Peer about, will ye? Small-arm men, stand to your tackling—clear away both guns. Hush—what is that?"

"Nothing," said Sprawl—"I hear nothing but the rushing of the river, and the groaning and rubbing of the boats alongside against the gunwale."

"But I do," said Pumpbolt.

"And so do I," said Mr Marline. "There is the splash of paddles as plain as can be—there"—

"Where?" said De Walden.

"There," said Binnacle—"there;" and, at the very instant, I saw the dark prow of one canoe emerge from the fog, the after-part being hid under the thick, but moon-illumined haze. Presently another appeared close to her, but less distinctly; both assuming a wavering and impalpable appearance, like two large fish seen, one near, and the other farther off, in muddy water.

"Mr Marline, fire at that fellow nearest us."

The moment the musket was discharged, the canoe backed into the fog again, but we could plainly hear the splash and whiz of a number of paddles rapidly plied, as if in great alarm. But even these sounds soon ceased, and, once more, all was still. For half an hour after this, all hands remained on the *qui*

vive, but the silence continued unbroken ; so, after seeing the lookouts all right, Sprawl, Pumpbolt, and myself (as for Lanyard he would not leave the deck) went below to have a snack of supper, preparatory to making a start of it, if it were possible, whenever the swell on the bar was quieter.

“ Tol lol de rol,” sung *ould* Davie Doublepipe. “ Oh Benjie Brail, Benjie Brail, are we never to get out of this Styx—out of this infernal river ? What say you, Pumpbolt, my man ?”

“ I’ll tell you more about it,” said Pumpbolt, “ when we have got some grub. But *what* Sir Oliver has done, or how he has managed without *me*, for these two days past, *is* a puzzler.”

“ Ah, bad for you master,” said I. “ He will find he *can* do without you—should not have given him the opportunity, man.”

“ No more I should—no more I should,” responded the master.

So we set to our meal, and were making ourselves as comfortable as circumstances admitted, when Binnacle trundled down the ladder in red-hot haste.

“ The canoes are abroad again, sir,—we hear them close to, but the fog is thicker than ever.”

“ The devil !” said I ; and we all hurried on deck.

Imminent peril is a beautiful antisoporific, and we found all hands at quarters of their own accord—the devil a drum need to have been beaten.

“ Where do you hear them—where is the noise you speak of ?” said Sprawl,

“ Here, sir,” said one man—“ Here, sir,” said an-

other—and “Here,” exclaimed a third, all indicating different points of the compass.

It was clear our enemies were clustering round us in force, although the fog was absolutely impervious at a distance of ten paces.

“I say, master,” said Sprawl, “the bar should almost be passable now for a light craft like this?”

“Certainly,” said Pumpbolt, “I make no doubt but it is; and if this cursed mist would only clear away, I would undertake to take the Midge, were she twenty tons bigger, slap across it, and pledge my credit she should clear it as sound as a bell; for we have a noble moon, and Brail there is quite confident about the river; besides, I took the bearings of the westernmost channel with the eastern point this very morning. No fear, if it would *but* clear. See if the moonshine has not made the fog quite gauzelike, as if it were bright and luminous of itself—Oh that it would rise!”

The four little reefers were at this moment clustered forward, close to me; we were riding with our head up the river, and I saw one or two old hands alongside of them, all looking out, and stretching their necks and straining their eyes in a vain attempt to pierce the fog.

“What is that?”—It was a greasy cheep, and then a rattle, as if a loose purchase or fall had suddenly been shaken, so as to make the blocks clatter, and then hauled taught, as if people were having a pull at the boom-sheet of a schooner, or other fore-and-aft rigged vessel.

“ What is that, indeed ? ” said Sprawl. “ Why, look there—look there, Lanyard—see you nothing there ? ”

“ No, I see nothing—eh—faith, but I do—why, what is that ? —Stand by, small-arm men—go to quarters the rest of ye—quick—Poo, it is simply a thicker wreath of mist, after all.”

Pumbolt was standing by, but the object that we thought we had seen descending the river was no longer visible, and I began to think it was fancy. Suddenly the mist thinned.

“ There is the spectre-like object once more,” I shouted. “ By all that is portentous, it is a large schooner, one of these slaving villains, who thinks he can steal past us under cover of the mist—There—there he is on our quarter—there are his royal and gaff topsail over the thickest of the fog—now his jib is stealing out of it.”

“ Clear away both guns there,” sung out the fourth lieutenant. “ We shall give him a rally as he passes, if he won’t speak.”

The strange sail continued to slide noiselessly down the river.

“ What vessel is that ? ”—No answer—“ Speak, or I will fire into you.”—All silent—“ Take good aim, men—fire ! ”

Both cannon were discharged, and, as if by magic, the watery veil that had hid every thing from our view rose from the bosom of the midnight river, and hung above our mast-head in a luminous fleecy cloud, which the moonbeams impregnated, but did not pierce,

being diffused by it over the whole scene below in a mild radiance, like that cast by the ground glass globe of a sinumbra lamp,—and disclosing suddenly the dark stream above and on each side of us, covered with canoes within pistol-shot; while the large schooner that we had fired into, instead of making demonstrations to escape over the bar, now shortened sail, and bore up resolutely across our bows, firing two guns and a volley of small arms into us in passing.

“ We are beset, Lanyard—that chap is the commander-in-chief. His object is not to escape, but to capture us, my lad—take my word for it,” cried Sprawl. “ Forward, master, and look out for the channel—Lanyard, I recommend you to let Brail take the helm—I will mind the sails.”

“ True enough, by Jupiter,” sung out old Dick. “ Knock off from the guns, men—Shavings, stand by to cut the cable—hoist away the sail there—cant her with her head to the eastward—steady, men, and no rushing now. All ready there forward ?”

“ All ready, sir.”

“ Cut away, then.”

The clear axe glanced bright and blue in the moonlight, and fell twice in heavy gashing thumps, and the third time in a sharp trenchant *chip*. The next moment the rushing of the rapid stream past our sides ceased, as the little vessel slowly floated away, attaining gradually the velocity of the river in which she swam. Presently round she came.

“ Hoist away, foresail and mainsail—hoist—haul aft the sheets.”

The breeze freshened at the moment. We were still about a mile from the bar, on which the swell was breaking in thunder; but we had run clear of the skirts of the mist, and the placid moon was again shining crystal bright overhead. The yells from the canoes increased. A volley of spears were lanced at us, several of which fell on board, but none of them did any injury; and several muskets were also fired from the tiny men-of-war, which were equally innocuous. The strange sail was right in our path.

“What shall we do?” sung out old Pumpbolt from forward.

Trusting to the great strength of the Midge, Lan-yard shouted,—“Plump us right aboard of him, if you can’t do better; but creep under his stern, if you can. So starboard, Brail—starboard—steady—that will do.”

“Steady,” I replied; but he would not give us the opportunity, for as he saw us booming along, apparently aiming at him right amidships, as if we had thought we could have sawn him in two, the youth bore up, and stood right for the bar.

“So, so,” quoth Davie Doublepipe—“we are away on a party of pleasure together, I perceive, señor?”

We carried on, but the Don, from superior sailing, kept well on our bow; and we were now, as we could judge from the increasing roar of the breakers, rapidly approaching the river’s mouth.

At this time we had a distinct view, not only of our formidable antagonist, a large topsail schooner, and apparently full of men, but of the bar which

we were about to pass, in such uncomfortable fellowship.

The canal of deep water that our steady and most excellent master aimed at, was about fifty yards wide. In it there was depth enough to allow the swell from without to roll in, clear and unbroken, had it not been met by the downward current of the river, aided, as in the present case, by the land-breeze, which made it break in short foam-crested waves.

We carried on. All firing for the moment was out of our craniums on either side.

"Do you see your marks now, Mr Brail—there in the clear?" cried the master.

"Yes; I have the two trees on with the hummock—we are running straight as an arrow for the channel."

"Steady then," sung out the old master.

"Steady," I returned once more.

On the right hand and on the left the swell was by this time breaking in thunder, flashing up in snow-flakes, and sending up a misty drizzle into the cold moonlight sky; but the channel right a-head was still comparatively quiet.

The schooner made an attempt to luff across our bows.

"Aim at him again," sung out old Bloody Politeful. "Aim at him again, Lanyard; to heave-to here is impossible."

"Boarders, stand by," cried Lanyard; but he once more, as we approached him, kept away.

We were now actually on the bar. The noise was

astounding—deafening. The sea foamed and raged, and flew up in mist, and boiled in over our decks on either hand, as if we had been borne away in some phantom ship, that floated on white foam instead of water ; while, in the very channel we were running through, the heave of the sea from without was met by the rush of the stream downwards, and flashed up in numberless jets of sparkling water, which danced about in the moonlight, and curled, and hissed, and vanished, as if they had been white-shrouded, unreal midnight spectres. We ran on, the strange sail on our lee-beam.

“ Now is your chance,” shouted old Pumpbolt ; “ jam him down against the long reef there—up with your helm, Mr Brail.”

“ Ease off the sheets,” chimed in the first lieutenant. “ Handsomely, men—handsomely.”

In an instant our broadsides were rasping.

“ Starboard—shove him down, Mr Brail !” again shrieked the master ; “ hard-a-weather—keep her away, and ram him on the reef there, or let us board him—time enough to luff when he strikes.”

I was fully alive to all this. The whole scene was now brightly lit up by the glorious moon, and we could perfectly see what we were about. We sheered close aboard of the schooner.

“ Fire, small-arm men—boarders, be ready.”

He still eschewed the combat, however, and kept off the wind also. A bright rainbow was at this moment formed by the moonbeams in the salt spray—the blessed emblem of peace and forgiveness — *here !*

thought I, even in that overwhelming moment. Yes; the bow of the Immutable, of Him who hath said, “ My ways are not like your ways ! ” spanned the elemental turmoil, the scene of the yet more fearful conflict of man’s evil passions, in a resplendent arch, through which the stars sparkled, their bright rays partaking of the hues through which they shone. Oh, it was like the hope of mercy breaking through the gloom, and sanctifying, if it could not still, the troubled heavings of a sinner’s deathbed !

“ A good omen—a glorious omen ! ” shouted young de Walden in the excitement of the moment.

“ Jam her on the reef ! ” again yelled the master.

I did so. Crash—the schooner struck. Her foremast bent forward like a willow wand, the cordage and blocks rattling, and then went over the bows like a shot. The next sea broke over her in smoke, and hove her broadside on upon the reef—another shock, and the mainmast was lumbering and rasping over the sides. She now fell off with her broadside to the sea, which was making a fair breach over her ; and while the cries of the unfortunates aboard of her rent the air, and it was clear she must instantly go to pieces, we all at once slid out of the infernal turmoil of dashing waves—“ the hell of waters ”—and rose buoyantly on the long smooth swell, that was rolling in from the offing. For a minute before not a word had been spoken by officers or men, all hands being riveted to the deck, looking out, and expecting every instant to see the vessel under foot driven into staves ; but now, as each man drew a long breath, old Davie, with

most unlooked-for agility, gave a *spang* into the air; and while he *skiffed* his old hat over the mast-head, as an offering to Neptune, the gallant little Midge bent to the freshening blast, like a racehorse laying himself to his work, and once more bounded exultingly “o'er the glad waters of the dark blue sea,” as if the sweet little craft had been instinct with life, and conscious that she had once more regained her own proper element—the cloven water roaring at her bows, as the stem tore through it, like a trenchant ploughshare; and dashing it right and left into smoke, until it rushed past us in a white sheet of buzzing water, that spun away in a long straight wake astern; in the small yeasty *swirls* of which the moon and stars sparkled diamond-like, but of many hues, as if the surface of the ever-restless ocean had been covered with floating prisms.—“ Hurrah—hurrah—we are once more in blue water ! ” *

* Some weeks after the preceding chapters appeared in Blackwood, the following accounts of poor Lander's untimely fate reached England—melancholy vouchers for the truth of the descriptions contained in them :—

MURDER OF RICHARD LANDER.

(*Official Despatch.*)

“ SIR,—Admiral Warren having mentioned to me your wish that any intelligence respecting the expedition on this coast might be addressed to you privately, I take the advantage of this communication to state, that on my arrival here this day from the Cape and Sierra Leone, I found Mr Lander had died on the 2d instant of a wound in the thigh.

“ Mr Lander left here some time since for Cape Coast Castle, to procure boats, &c. ; and having got one boat and two canoes, manned by four Englishmen, seventeen black men, and two boys, had proceeded up the Niger nearly to the town of Hiammock

(about 100 miles). Confident of the friendship of the natives, he was tracking the boat along there near the turn of the river, and abreast of the island, which much narrowed the passage, when, at 2 p.m., on the 20th ultimo, the boat grounding, a heavy fire was opened from the bush on both sides, and from the island, which killed two men, and wounded himself with three others. A number of large armed canoes coming round the point at the same time, they were obliged to abandon the boat, take to the canoes, and make a running fight for four hours, in which they lost another Englishman, killed, and four blacks wounded—making a total of three killed, and eight wounded.

“ He got to the Craven cutter, waiting at the mouth of the river, late in the afternoon of the 21st, arrived here on the 25th, and died on the 2d of this month.

“ Mr Lander estimated the parties that attacked him at from eight to ten thousand, all armed with swords or muskets—a number, no doubt, much exaggerated—and felt convinced, from the judicious position they occupied, that some Europeans were assisting, which, from the slavers being much opposed to the English, and any trade on the coast, is very probable.

“ A Mrs Brown (wife of an English merchant up the river), with her child, passengers, and a wounded black boy, were unavoidably left in the boat when she was abandoned; but Mr Lander communicated with King Boy, who immediately sent about them, and had great hopes they would be returned uninjured. The loss to the company in arms, goods, &c. on the occasion is stated to be about £.450.

“ I trust I have not troubled you with unnecessary details, and beg to remain, sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

“ RICHARD MEREDITH,
“ Commander of his Majesty's sloop Pelorus.

“ Fernando Po, February 5, 1834.

“ P.S.—Two vessels sail for England to-morrow morning. I send accounts by each. “ R. M.”

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

The following is an extract of a letter from the agent to Lloyd's at Fernando Po, dated February 6, 1834:—

“ You will be sorry to be informed of the death of Richard Lander, who left this place some weeks since in the Craven cutter, belonging to the company, taking with him a long-boat I let him have for the purpose. On his arrival at the Nunn, he left the cutter, and proceeded up the river in the boat with £.400

worth of goods, to join the iron steam-boat, which he had sent up a few weeks before. She was to proceed about 300 miles to a small island, which he had purchased from the king, and where he had a factory. They had proceeded about 100 miles up, the current being strong against them. They were in good spirits, tracking the boat along shore, when they were fired on from the bush. Three men were killed, and four wounded: Mr Lander was of the latter. They had a canoe of their own, and at the time they were fired on, the boat was aground; and to save themselves, they were forced to leap into the canoe, and make the best of their way. They were immediately followed by five or six war-canoes full of men, keeping up a continued fire for five hours, until it got dark, when they lost sight of them. They arrived here on the 27th ultimo. Mr Lander expired this morning. He wrote me a letter two days ago, requesting that I would take charge of the vessels and property of the African Inland Commercial Company, with which I accordingly complied. The ball entered near his hip, and worked down to the thick of the thigh. It was a most malicious and treacherous attack. Mr Lander told me that there were Bonny, Brass, and Benin canoes; so that, from these circumstances, I am of opinion that some of the slavers, or other Europeans, have been the promoters of this murderous affair. Colonel Nicolls has forwarded a statement of the transaction to Government, and if proper steps are taken, the whole must be brought to light. Mr Lander's clothes and papers are all lost. I have had a great deal of trouble with the expedition, and now it will be increased; but the value of Fernando Po, in all cases of difficulty, is incalculable, and I shall now communicate a little information relating to this island, and also to the slave trade. On New Year's day, at daylight, there were four vessels in sight, two brigs, and two small vessels, schooner rigged, in company with one of the brigs. One of them anchored, named the Renown of Liverpool, M'Nab, master, belonging to Sir John Tobin, three months' passage. Two hours afterwards the other brig and two small schooners anchored. They turned out to be his Majesty's brig Trinculo and two slavers, captured off the Gaboons, belonging to Prince's island, fifty-four slaves and a crew of fifteen men on board each. The slavers were surveyed by the officers of his Majesty's vessels the Curlew, Griffin, and Trinculo, and condemned as unfit to proceed to Sierra Leone. Captain Warren, son of Admiral Warren, wrote to Colonel Nicolls, on service, requesting him to allow the slaves to be landed here, which request was immediately complied with. The spectacle was horrible. There were several children that must have been torn from the

breast, for when landed, it was found necessary to give them in charge to the women, to take care of. So much for Prince's island, that nest for piratical slavers. If Colonel Nicolls had three Government steamers under his control, he would put down the slave traffic on the coast in six months, by destroying their nests in the rivers. At present the Government vessels only cruise about, and pick up a slaver occasionally."

CHAPTER VII.

A WARM RECEPTION.

WE bowled along for half-an-hour, keeping a bright look-out for the frigate, but we could see nothing of her.

“ I say, Sprawl, had we not better heave-to, till daylight? You see we can make nothing out as to her whereabouts; mind we do not run past her in the night.”

“ Indeed, Lanyard, I think we had better—so heave-to at once, will ye ? ”

The word was passed; and after having given little Binnacle his instructions to call him the instant they made out the frigate, or the weather assumed a threatening aspect, Sprawl and I went below to secure a couple of hours’ sleep, troubled though they might be, before day broke. We had just commenced on our salt junk, and having each of us filled a glass of grog, I was in the very act of hobbing and nobbing with my illustrious ally, when we heard some one call down the after-hatchway. I instantly recognised the voice of Corporal Lennox.

“ I say, Dogvane, do rouse out Mr De Walden—I know he is regularly done up, but it is his watch, and

unless he is on deck at muster, he will be sure to catch it, and I should be sorry that he did."

"Why, master corporal," responded the quarter-master, "you might have put yourself to the trouble of coming down yourself and awakening Mr De Walden, and so you would have been under no obligation to nobody; but I won't grudge the trouble, so I will do it for you."

"Hillo," we immediately heard old Dogvane sing out, "on deck, there."

"What do you want?" replied Corporal Lennox.

"Oh, nothing, but Mr De Walden is not here."

"Never mind then, old fellow," said Lennox, "he is in the cabin, I suppose."

Here little Binnacle struck in—"Why, Lennox, what are you bothering about; did I not desire you to call Mr De Walden?"

"You did sir, but he is not below, unless he be in the cabin."

"Well, did you ask the captain's steward if he was there or not?"

"No, sir."

"Ask him now, then; and tell him to say to Mr De Walden that he is wanted."

"I'll tell you what,"—(at this moment struck in old Davie),—"I am deucedly done up, so tip me the case-bottle again, and I will make another tumbler of grog, and then turn in till daylight—for even if we make the frigate out, what use is there in"—

"Hush," said I, "what is that?" There was a buzz on deck, and a rattling up the ladder of the people

from below, and we could hear a voice say, "Mr De Walden ! he is not in the berth below,"—another responded, "The captain's steward says he is not in the cabin."—"Is Mr De Walden forward there, boatswain?"—"No," sung out a gruff voice, sounding low, and mollified by distance,—"No Mr De Walden here."

"Is Mr De Walden aft there?" continued little Binnacle.

"No sir—no."

A sudden light flashed on me—I trembled, and a chill curdled the blood at my heart, for I had not seen him since we had hove the schooner on the reef. I ran on deck, but as I ascended the ladder, "Pooh," said I to myself, "all nonsense—why put myself into a flurry?" And as I stepped off the ladder, little Binnacle called down the main-hatchway—

"I say, De Walden—Henry—Henry De Walden—come on deck, man—come on deck—this is no time for skylarking—Mr Lanyard is on deck."

Several gruff voices replied from below, "Mr De Walden is *not* here, sir."—"No Mr De Walden here."

The buzz increased—"Is Mr De Walden forward there?"

"No."

"Is he below?"

"No, sir, no—no Mr De Walden here."

Old Bloody Politeful, kind-hearted soul as he always was, had now also turned out—"Why, Brail, what is all this bother about?"

"My dear Sprawl," said I, greatly excited, "young De Walden is nowhere to be seen."

"Nonsense," rejoined he; "why, he was standing close beside me the whole time we were crossing the bar, even up to the time when I was fool enough to *squir* my old hat over the masthead."

"And so he was," chimed in Pumpbolt.

"Then beat to quarters," said Mr Lanyard;—"the gallant youngster never missed muster yet—Desire them to beat to quarters, Mr Marline."

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the midshipman. All hands turned out promptly.

"Men," said the lieutenant—"Mr De Walden is missing.—Have any of you seen him?"

"No, sir,—none of us have seen him since the strange schooner struck."

"Have you overhauled the midshipmen's berth, Mr Marline?"

"Yes, sir."

"The whole ship has been searched," said little Binnacle, who had just returned from below; "cable-tier, hold, and all. The boatswain and carpenter have been all over her. The gunner has even looked into the magazine. Mr De Walden *is not* on board, sir."

"Poo, there he is at the masthead,—there," said I; for as I looked up I distinctly saw, either with my bodily optic, or my mind's eye, I am not quite certain which to this hour, a dark figure standing on the long-yard, with one hand holding on by a backstay, while with the other it pointed upwards into the pure sky. Old Dick at this was in a towering passion. "Come down—Mr De Walden—come down,

sir—what is the fun of all this?—why, your absence has put the whole ship in a fuss—we thought you had fallen overboard.” The dark object remained stock-still. “What *can* the captain see?” passed amongst the men. “Why, *I* see nothing, but Mr Brail does,” quoth *el señor teniente*. “Do you see any thing at the masthead?” said one to his neighbour—“Do *you* see any thing?” quoth another. No one saw any thing but myself. “Look there, Sprawl—there—by Heaven what can this mean—*do* you really see nothing there?” The worthy fellow shaded his eyes with his hand, and kept twisting and turning and rolling his head about, as if it had been fixed on the ball and socket principle; but the object that had fascinated me was invisible to him. Gradually the figure, without changing its position, *thinned*; and anon, as if it had been a shred of dark vapour between us and the heavens, the stars were seen through it; but the outline, to my distempered vision, was still as well defined as ever. Presently, however, it began to grow indistinct and misty; and, whatever it was, it imperceptibly melted away and disappeared. *De Walden was nowhere to be found*. I looked back towards the dark estuary we had left. The sky in the background was heavy, black, and surcharged, as if it had been one vast thundercloud; but the white line of breakers on the bar continued distinctly visible; over which the heavenly moonlight rainbow still hovered, although gradually fading; and even as I looked it ceased to be distinguishable. As it disappeared in the surrounding blackness, even so vanished all hope from my mind of young De Walden’s safety: and remembering the

poor boy's last words—"A good omen!" said I, "Alas, alas, an evil one it hath been to thee, poor boy!"

"Call the watch, boatswain's mate," said Lanyard; and without speaking a word more, he, old Davie, and I descended to the cabin again.

"What saw you aloft, Benjie? tell us truly—none of your waking dreams, you mongrel, half Scotchman, half Pat," said Sprawl.

I told him.

"I know it is downright nonsense—there was no one aloft, and I am persuaded it was all a delusion; still"—

"Nonsense—to be sure it is all nonsense—regular moonshine, Benjie," said Davie—"cannot be—you are overfatigued, man—you will laugh at all this tomorrow—but poor young De Walden—he must have fallen overboard when we drove the Don on the reef. God help us—what a melancholy report we shall have to make to Sir Oliver! but give us some grog, Lanyard, you sticky old villain, and I will lie down on the locker till daylight."

I was bewildered—my mind from my early youth was tinged with superstition, but, nevertheless, what could this have been? For four-and-twenty hours, whatever I might have drank, I had eaten little or nothing,—and I began to perceive that I laboured under the oppressive effects of such a recoil as one experiences after having had the folly and audacity to get tipsy on unaided champagne, without having stowed away a ground tier of wholesome solid food;

besides, I now found that the blow on my head, hard and thick as that might be, was beginning to tell ; for I was aware that my pulse was feverish, and I had had several attacks of giddiness during the evening. I puzzled myself for half-an-hour in vain ; at length I came to the conclusion, no doubt the correct one, that it was a freak of the imagination. When I raised my head from my hand, by which time the lamp was flickering in the socket, I saw my friends sound asleep, so I was not long in following their example, and worn out as I was, I soon forgot every thing, and was as fast as they were.

I was awoke by the mate of the watch calling Mr Lanyard about half an hour before daylight.

“ We see the commodore, sir, about two miles on the lee-beam,” said Mr Marline, as he stuck his head into the cabin.

“ Very well—I will be on deck presently—how is her head ?”

“ South-west, sir—but the wind is very light.”

He retired—and Dick having rigged with an expedition unknown to all mankind, *barring* a sailor or a monkey, went on deck. A restless fit had overtaken me, so I soon followed him.

It was now four in the morning—there were clouds in the sky, but very little wind. In the east, all was clear—the morning star had already slipt her moorings, and was several degrees above the horizon, against which the rolling swell rose and sank as black as ink, except where the glorious planet cast a tiny wake on it, glittering in a small line of silver light ; underneath,

the glow of the advancing sun gradually tinged the sky and every shred of clouds with a crimson flush.

On the other hand, when we looked down to leeward, far in the steamy west, the declining moon hung over the dark sea pale and sickly, as a lamp whose oil had failed. She looked as if she would have dropped at once into the ocean, and the feeble wake she cast through the ascending fog was dull and cheerless. There, however, in the very centre of her half quenched radiance, lay the noble frigate, rolling heavily on the long seas, under her three topsails ; now rising distinct and clear against the horizon on the ridge of the dark swell, and again sinking on the liquid hills until she disappeared, as if the ever heaving waters had swallowed her up. All overhead continued blue, and cold, and serene.

“ Mr Marline, bear up, and run down to her.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

The deadening splash and gushing sound of the felucca’s counter, as it came surging down, while lying to, was soon, but gradually, exchanged for the rushing of the water and buzzing of the foam past a vessel rapidly cleaving the billows.

As we approached, all remained quiet and still on board the frigate. We stood on—not a soul seemed to notice us—we crossed her stern—still all silent, and at length we rounded to under her lee. We were so close that one might have chucked a biscuit into her gangway.

“ Are you waiting for a boat, Mr Lanyard ?” at length said the officer of the watch, the old gunner.

"No, no," he replied, "I will be on board presently."

Sprawl was roused out, and in a few seconds we were in our own tiny skiff, and approaching the frigate. All continued dark and dismal, as we looked up at her black hull, dark sails, and tall spars. She was rolling heavily, the masts and yards groaning, the bulkheads creaking and screaming, and the topsails fluttering and grumbling, until the noise, every now and then, ended in a sounding thump, as if the old ship, in all her parts, were giving audible indications of her impatience of the tedious calm ; while her stained canvass appeared to be as heavy as if a wetting shower had just poured down. We approached, and as the man in the bow stuck his boat-hook into the old lady's side to fend off, the sidesman handed us the man-ropes, and presently we were all three on the Gazelle's quarterdeck.

Every thing was wet and uncomfortable—the heavy dew was dripping down from the shrouds and rigging, and every lumbering flap of the topsails sent a cold shower pattering on deck. The watch had all roused out from the booms, and were clustered on the hammock cloths, looking down on us. When we got on deck, they followed us as far aft as they thought they might venture to do, while others again had hung themselves in a variety of ways over the side to get the marrow of our secret out of our boat's crew. The old gunner was arrayed in his pea-jacket and blue trowsers, as if he had been in the North Sea ; and the red sparkle of the light in the

binnacle glanced on the face and chest of the sunburned seaman at the wheel.

"How is Sir Oliver, and Mr Garboard, and Mr Donovan?"

Any man who has lived in such a climate will evince no wonder at the anxiety and rapidity with which the questions were put.

"Why, all pretty well," said the gunner. "Sir Oliver, indeed, has been ill, but is now better—and Mr Garboard is nearly all right again; he took the forenoon watch yesterday, sir. But as for Mr Donovan, why, sir,"—

"Never mind, never mind," said Sprawl; "send down to Sir Oliver, and say that we have got on board."

The man dived, and presently brought a message that Sir Oliver desired to see us in his cabin.

We descended; a solitary lamp hung from the deck above, and lit up the large cabin any thing but brilliantly. It had the appearance of having been newly lit, and wanting oil,—for when we first entered it was flaring up like a torch, but gradually declined until we could scarcely see about us. As you have not been below before, I will describe it.

The cabin was very large, even for a vessel of her class, and was not subdivided in any way. There were four guns, long twenty-fours, two of a side, but the devil a stick of furniture in it, with the exception of the table in the middle, and six or seven chairs, two black hair sofas, one on each side of the cabin, a chest of drawers, and the crimson curtains before the stern

windows. The portrait of a lady was the only ornament, a buxom-looking dame, but of the Earth earthly, nothing ethereal about her.

The commodore's cot hung well aft, near the small door that opened into the quarter-gallery on the starboard side—the bed-clothes were all disarranged as if he had recently risen ; and at first we thought he must have left the cabin as we came down, and walked forward on the main-deck.

“ Where is the commodore ? ” said Lanyard to the captain's steward, who accompanied us with a light, but which had been blown out by the opening of the cabin door.

“ I left him in the cabin, sir—I suppose he is there still, sir.”

By this time the ruddy east was brightening ; the light that shone through the stern windows came in aid of the dim lamp, and we saw a figure, Sir Oliver as we conceived, stretched on one of the sofas that stood between the aftermost gun and the quarter-gallery door, on the larboard side. The man brought two candles and placed them on the table. Both Sprawl and myself had been rather surprised that the commodore did not instantly address us as we entered, but we now noticed that the gallant old fellow was very pale and wan, and that he spoke with difficulty, as if he had been labouring under asthma.

“ Welcome, gentlemen—glad to see you back again. I am prepared to hear that you have failed in your object—quite prepared ; but I have been down ever since you shoved off, and am far from well yet.”

He rose and shook hands with us with all his usual cordiality of manner.

"Sit down, gentlemen,—there—sit down. Howard, get coffee."

It was handed.

"Well, Master Brail—you have had enough of piloting and cutting out," said he, endeavouring to appear cheery and unconcerned—"curiosity quite satisfied I daresay." I was about replying when he continued, addressing the lieutenants.

"You have had some fighting, I suppose—indeed, we heard the firing distinctly enough."

"Yes, comodore," said Sprawl, "enough and to spare of that; but, as you have guessed, we were unable to bring out the polacre—she now lies sunk in the river."

"Well, well," rejoined Sir Oliver, "I will hear the particulars by and by; but I hope you have not lost any, at least not *many* of the people—none killed I hope?—this horrible climate will leave few of us for gunpowder soon—none killed I hope?—a few wounded, of course, I bargain for"—

Sprawl was silent for a minute, and then handed him the return.—"Indeed, Sir Oliver," said he, "I am grieved to tell you that it has been a bad business; we have lost several excellent men, and our doctor's list is also heavy; however, all the wounded are likely to do well."

The commodore took the paper in his nervous hand, and as he read the official account of our adventure, it shook violently, and his pale lip quivered, as

he exclaimed from time to time—"God bless me, how unfortunate! how miserably unfortunate! But, gentlemen, you deserve all praise—you have behaved nobly, gallantly. I have no heart, however, to read the return. You have had how many killed?" turning to Lanyard.

He mentioned the number.

"And wounded?"

He also gave him the information he desired in this respect.

"Merciful Heaven!" groaned the excellent man—"but it cannot be helped—it cannot be helped. Pray," said he, the tone of his voice changed—I noticed it quavered, and he seemed to screw his words through his clenched teeth with difficulty,—all of which surprised me a good deal—"none of the boys—the young gentlemen—none of the midshipmen are hurt, or"—

He seemed afraid to pronounce the word "killed." Sprawl looked at Lanyard. He saw that he hung in the wind.

"Why, no, sir," said he. "Why, no, none of them seriously hurt."

"Nor killed?" said the commodore, affecting to be at ease, as he lay back on his sofa; "I am glad of it,—I thank heaven for it. But really I am so weak from this confounded complaint!"

"No, sir," continued old Davie, "none of the midshipmen are either killed or wounded, but Mr De Walden"—

He suddenly raised himself into a sitting position,

and the increasing daylight, that streamed through the stern windows, and the scuttle overhead, showed that he was paler than ever ; the ague of his lip increased, and his whole frame trembled violently, as he said in a weak nervous voice—“ Mr De Walden, did you say ? what of him ? You just now said *none* of the young gentlemen were either killed or wounded.” And he looked first at Sprawl, then at Dick, and lastly at me, but all of us were so taken aback by such unusual and unaccountable conduct, that for a second or two we could make no answer.

At length Lanyard rallied his wits about him. “ You are right, sir, none of the midshipmen were hurt, but Mr de Walden”—

“ Mr de Walden again !—what can you mean ? Speak out, for the love of mercy ”—and he seized his arm, and then shrunk away again, and held up his hand, as if he could not stand the hearing of what he might utter. “ Don’t say it, Mr Lanyard ; don’t, if you regard me, say it ;” and he lay back, and held both hands on his eyes, and sobbed audibly.

Sprawl and I again exchanged looks, but neither of us could find it in our hearts to speak.

At length the old man made a violent effort at composure,—“ Gentlemen, you will pardon me ; disease has broken me down, and fairly unhinged me ; and I could, as you see, cry like a woman. I had, indeed, a very peculiar cause for loving that poor boy. I fancy, God help me”—here the large tears streamed over his old cheeks, that had stood the washing up of many a salt spray—“ that I see him now !”

"Where?" said I, like honest Horatio, somewhat startled. He did not notice the interruption.

"I believe he had not an enemy in the world; I am sure he will be lamented by every man and officer in the ship, poor young fellow. But come, gentlemen, enough and to spare of this"—and he rose up, and strode across the cabin, speaking with a forced composure, as we could easily perceive. "We must all die, in a sick bed or in action—either on shore or at sea; and those who, like him, fall while fighting gallantly, are better off than others who drag through a tedious and painful disease. This is trite talking, gentlemen; but it is true—God's will be done! Peace be with him, poor boy; peace be with him."

Thinking he was mad, I several times tried to break in, and disburden my mind of the whole story; but he always waved me down impatiently, and continued to walk backwards and forwards very impetuously.

At length he made a full stop, and looked earnestly in the first lieutenant's face—"He behaved gallantly, and died nobly?—all his wounds in the front?"

I could allow this to go on no longer. "Why, Sir Oliver, young De Walden is not killed, so far as we know."

He gasped—caught my arm convulsively—and burst into a weak hysterical laugh—"Not dead?"

"No, sir; none of us can say that he is dead. He did indeed behave most gallantly through the whole affair; but"—

"But what?" said he—his eyes sparkling, his

brows knit, and his features blue and pinched, as if he had seen a spectre—"But what, Mr Brail? for God Almighty's sake, tell me the worst at once."

"Sir Oliver, he is *missing*."

His hands dropped by his side, as if suddenly struck with palsy; his jaw fell, and his voice became hollow, tremulous, and indistinct, as if the muscles of his lips and tongue had refused to do their office. When he spoke, it seemed as if the words had been formed in his chest—"Missing!"

"Yes, Sir Oliver," said Sprawl, utterly thunderstruck at his superior's conduct—"Mr De Walden is *missing*."

The old man staggered, and would have fallen, had he not caught hold of the scroll head of the sofa. I thought he had fainted, but he gradually recovered himself, and stood erect. There was a long pause. At length he made a step towards us, and said, with an expression of the most bitter irony—"So, gentlemen, Mr De Walden is *missing*; the only officer *missing* is a poor young midshipman; a prisoner amongst these savages, forsooth; a prisoner! Oh, God! I could have brooked hearing of his death;—but a prisoner, and in the power of such an enemy! I bless Heaven that his poor mother has been spared this misery—would that I had also been in my grave before—But, but"—his tone suddenly became fierce and threatening, and he raised his hand close to my face. I thought he would have struck me—"But how came it, Mr Brail—Mr Sprawl and Mr Lanyard there, I see, are both scathless—but you have been wounded, so I will

speak to *you*—How came it, sir, that he is missing? He must have been deserted, sir—forsaken—left to his fate—and such a fate!—while you, my worthy lieutenants,” here he turned round fiercely on his two subalterns, “ were wisely looking out for a sound skin and safety.”

We were all so utterly taken by surprise at this furious climax to what we began to consider the commodore’s insanity, that neither the first lieutenant, Lanyard, nor myself, notwithstanding all that had passed, could speak; which gave Sir Oliver time to breathe and continue in the same tone of fiendlike acerbity—“ If I live, you shall both answer for this before a court-martial. Yes; and if you escape there, you *shall not escape me.*”

“ Commodore—Sir Oliver,” said Sprawl, deeply stung; “ by Heaven, Sir Oliver, you will make me forget who I am, and where I am. You do *me*, you do Mr Lanyard, and the whole of the party engaged, exceeding injustice—the grossest injustice; but I will leave the cabin; I dare not trust myself any longer. I have served with you, Sir Oliver, for seven years, in three different ships, and, to my knowledge, we have never, until this moment, had an angry word together”—and here the noble fellow drew himself up proudly—“ and I will yet put it to you yourself, when you *are* yourself, whether in all that time you ever knew me failing in my duty to my king and country—whether, during the whole seven years, you, sir—ay, or any man in the ships we have served in together—can now lay, or ever attempted to lay, any action or

deed at my door derogatory to my character as an officer, or that in any the smallest degree sullied my reputation as a gentleman."

This unlooked-for spunk on old Davie's part startled me, and evidently made a strong impression on the excited nerves of the old commodore; especially as Sprawl followed it up, by slowly adding, while the tears hopped over his iron visage—"But, if it is to be so, I will save you the trouble, Sir Oliver, of *bringing* me to a court-martial"—he paused for a good space—"Sir Oliver Oakplank, I *demand* it."

The commodore had by this lain down again on the sofa, with his head resting on the pillow, and his arms clasped on his breast, as if he had been an effigy on a tombstone. For a minute he did not utter a word—at length—"David Sprawl, man and boy, I have known you five-and-twenty years; that your promotion has not kept pace with your merits I regret, almost as much as you yourself can do; but, in the present instance, you knew I had been ill, and at your hands I had expected more"—

"I could not help it, Sir Oliver—I had looked for other things; but mine has been a life of disappointment."

Sir Oliver rallied, and rose, ill as he was, and stepping up to him, he laid hold of old Bloody Politeful's large bony hand—"Mr Sprawl, I—I beg pardon—illness and anxiety, as I said before, have broke me down; to you and Mr Lanyard I offer my apology; as brave men I know you won't refuse it; bad health is my excuse;—but neither of you can imagine the

ties that bound me to that beautiful—that most excellent young man, Henry De Walden."

Dick now thought it was his turn, and made a rally—“ Why, Sir Oliver, I am sure that neither Mr Sprawl nor myself would yield, even to you, in regard for him.” He shook his head. “ Indeed, sir, we both knew the poor boy well; and”—here he plucked up more courage, determined in his own mind apparently that he would clap a stopper on their being ridden rough-shod over in this sort of way—but the commodore, far from showing fight, quietly allowed him to say out his say—“ We both knew him well—a finer or a braver lad never stepped; and I fancy, when I say so, I answer not only for Mr Sprawl and myself, but for every man who was with us in this ill-fated expedition. Had his rescue depended on our devoting ourselves, you may rely on it, Sir Oliver, either *we* should not have been here to tell the story, or *he* would have been alive to tell his own.”

The commodore once more lay back on the sofa, covering his face with his hands—“ Go on, Mr Lanyard—go on.”

“ Why, sir, he was with us, safe and sound, until we crossed the bar. I heard him sing out, ‘ a good omen—a good omen! ’ just as we jammed the Spanish schooner that had waylaid us, right down on the bank, in the very middle of the bar; but from that very instant of time no man in the ship saw or heard any thing of him.”

The old commodore appeared to be screwing up and gathering all his energies about him.

"Never saw him!—what—did he fall overboard? Tell me—tell me—*did* he fall overboard?"

"None of us saw him fall overboard, sir;" said I, desirous of making a diversion in favour of my friends, "but after that moment I never saw him alive."

"Alive!" echoed the commodore—"Alive! Did you see him dead, then?"

"No, sir, I think with you he must have gone overboard." There was a long and most irksome pause; at length the commodore broke it.

"Well, well, Benjamin, it cannot be helped, it cannot be helped."

Desirous of preventing another lull in the conversation, I hinted to the commodore that I had been subjected to a very strange delusion of the senses in passing the bar.

"Ay, indeed," said he, with a faint smile—"second sight, I presume—your Scotch star has been in the ascendant—but come, tell the whole story at once."

"I have told it before to Mr Sprawl, Sir Oliver; but really, on reflection, I have some scruples about recapitulating such nonsense at length again."

"Tell it," said Sir Oliver, looking at me with his lack-lustre eye—"tell it."

"Then, sir, I will, although I am quite prepared to be laughed at." I made a pause, for, to say the truth, I *was* really disinclined to say more on the subject, which I now regretted I had broached; but he waited for me. "We had just cleared the bar, sir, when, on looking up, to see how the sail drew, I saw, holding on by the main haulyards, and with his feet spread out

on our long lateen yard, a figure between me and the moonlight sky, as like Mr De Walden's as one could fancy any thing."

"Pray, did any other person see it?"

"No, sir, I don't believe any one else saw it."

"Then," continued the commodore, "it must have been all fancy. How had you lived that morning?"

"Why, sir, I was weak from want of food—indeed fairly worn out. Yet that the object was as palpable to me as if it had really been there, there is no disputing. I was startled at the time, I will confess; but"—here my superstitious feelings again began to rise up,—"he was never seen afterwards."

"Then your simple and entire opinion is—that *he is gone?*" We bowed our heads in melancholy acquiescence. "Never mind then," said Sir Oliver. "Never mind, God's blessed will be done. But, gentlemen, come and breakfast with me at half past eight." And we found ourselves straightway on deck again.

"I say, friend Sprawl," said I, so soon as we arrived at the upper regions—"have patience with me once more, and tell me seriously, what think you of me as a ghost seer; how do *you* account for the figure that I saw at the masthead?"

"In this very simple way, Benjie, as I told you before, that, at the best, you are an enthusiast; but in the present instance, being worn out by fatigue and starvation, you really and truly fancied you saw what was uppermost in your mind, and, so far as your excited fancy was concerned,—why, you *did* see it. But come down below—come down below. Let us go

and rig for our appearance before the commodore. So come along." And straight we dived into the gunroom.

I had, verily, as my excellent friend Sprawl said, been much excited, and while we were below, I had time to gather my thoughts about me. My first feeling was, that I had done very foolishly in telling my absurd story to the commodore; my second, that I had, which was really the simple fact, been imposed on by a false impression on my senses.

" Donovan, my darling," said I, addressing our friend, who was lying in his berth close to us, " I can forgive you now for being mad a bit, Dennis, dear."

" Come now, Brail, no quizzing, if you please ; I am deuced weak yet."

We made our toilet, and presently we were in the cabin again. Sir Oliver, when we entered, was sitting at the breakfast table. He had dressed ; and although he was still very pale, there was nothing peculiar in his manner, if it were not that he was, if any thing, kinder than usual. He led the conversation as far away from the recent expedition as he decently could, until breakfast was nearly over, when he suddenly addressed me. " Do you think, Mr Brail, since *you* saw him last, that there is any, the remotest chance of that poor boy being alive ? Would it, in your opinion, be of any avail our hovering off the coast for a few days, and sending in the boats occasionally ? "

I looked at old Bloody Politeful, who thereupon took the word up.

" No, commodore, I believe the poor boy is gone.

I conceive it would be lost time remaining here in the hope of his being alive."

"Enough, enough," said Sir Oliver. And from that time forth, he *never*, in my hearing at least, mentioned his name.

CHAPTER VIII.

CAPE MISSIONARIES.

I RETURNED on board of the Midge, as in Sir Oliver's weak state of health I thought it better to resist his desire that I should resume my cot in his cabin for the present.

Notwithstanding the hopelessness of young De Walden being alive, still we clung to this part of the coast for three whole days ; and several boats *were* sent in across the bar at high water on each day. But over the whole banks of the vile river there prevailed a churchyard silence. Not a native was to be seen ; and, on the evening of the third day, we all got safely and finally on board again. The night was spent as usual in making short boards, so as to hold our ground ; and at eleven on the following forenoon, Lanyard's signal was made to repair on board.

The gig was manned, and we pulled to the frigate. A number of joyous faces were stuck over the hammock cloths reconnoitring us as we approached, all on the broad grin apparently. I had no sooner reached the quarterdeck than I met Sprawl.

“ Ah ! Benjie, my love, congratulate us, we are to

bear up for the West Indies at noon, my boy. What do you think of that? We shall lose sight of this infernal coast for six months at all events."

" Ha, ha," said old Dick, forcing a laugh in great bitterness, " very lucky, very comfortable. What a beautiful station we must have, when the prospect of a furlough in the West Indies—the very shrine of the demon of yellow fever—is hailed with such uproarious demonstrations. However, be it so; any change must be for the better, so I do from my heart congratulate you. But as for me, I suppose I am destined to kick about in the Midge here, between Cape Coast and Fernando Po, so long as we last. None of us, Sprawl, will cope with Methuselah, take my word for it."

The excellent fellow took his hand. " True enough, Lanyard. You say rightly, Richard Lanyard. I had forgotten you altogether; and *now*, regarding your own course, really I can give you no information whatever. However, here comes the commodore. Shall I ask him?"

" By no manner of means," said Lanyard, feeling a little thin-skinned after the late affair; " time enough when he speaks himself."

Sir Oliver approached. I cannot say that I now perceived any difference between his usual manner and his present bearing. He was, if any thing, kinder than ever, and his quizzical way of carrying on had returned on him in full force. He first addressed himself to Mr Sprawl.

" See all clear, Mr Sprawl, to bear up at noon." The first lieutenant bowed.

The master was standing about ten feet from us. "Mr Pumpbolt," said the commodore, "come down with me to the cabin, if you please." And forthwith he stumped aft, and was in act to descend, when Lanyard caught his eye. "Oh, I had forgotten.—Here, Mr Lanyard, if you please." Dick walked aft to him. "Mr Lanyard, I had at first intended to have left the tender with the Cerberus, but, on second thoughts, as I may require all the people on the voyage home, I have determined to take you with me. That is, if you think the craft capable of making tolerable weather of it."

Don Ricardo was near pitching his hat over the mizen peak, and shouting aloud for joy, but that "idol, ceremony," restrained him.

"Strong, sir! Here, Shavings"—the carpenter's mate of the Gazelle, who had been promoted as a functionary of his in the Midge, and who had begged to come on board along with us, was passing forward at the moment—"Here, Shavings, Sir Oliver wants to know whether we consider the Midge capable of making the voyage from this to the West Indies; if we do not, *we are to be left on the coast here.*"

"Come—come," said the commodore, laughing, "no leading, Mr Lanyard."

The lieutenant began to think he had gone a little too far; and feeling somewhat *out*, looked towards Shavings for relief. The old carpenter, however, was not so prompt as he calculated on. His honesty appeared more stubborn than suited him—until he repeated the words, slewing them a little to his own

side, to suit the emergency. "Why, Mr Shavings, we are to be kept cruising about here, as tender to the Cerberus one day, and to Heaven knows who the next, while the Gazelle goes to the West Indies, and so round by Portsmouth, and all because the felucca is not considered sea-worthy, nor competent to the middle voyage."

"Oh," said Shavings, with a long drawl, "THAT is what you want to know, sir?" He then faced right round on Sir Oliver. "Why, sir, that 'ere little feluccre is as strong as well-seasoned Spanish oak and copper bolts can make her. The smell of the hold is so bad, sir, that we has to pump fresh water into her every morning watch to sweeten her, sir. Strong? if one half of her beams were sawn up into firewood, it would boil the frigate's coppers for a month; and the feluccre that is, Sir Oliver, would be swifter by half a knot, and none the weaker; and her bottom—oh, it is a perfect bed of timbers—why you might caulk them, sir; as for her bows, I believe they are strong enough for an ice-boat on the Neva; and such transomes—why, sir, I would rather be in her in a hurricane, than ere a fourty-four in the sarvice—were she even the old Gaz"—

Here the poor fellow saw he had in his zeal and desire to break away from this accursed coast, gone somewhat farther than he intended, so making his obeisance, he hauled off. Sir Oliver smiled.

"Well, well, Mr Lanyard, as I shall have occasion to call at Kingston, Jamaica, and afterwards proceed through the Gulf to Havanna, I will take you with me,

and send you to Havanna direct—so go on board, and send me your supernumeraries. I suppose all the wounded are well enough to be moved now?"

"Yes, Sir Oliver," said Dick, "all but that poor devil, Lennox, the corporal of marines. He is again down with fever."

"Well, but he will be better cared for here—so send him on board with the rest—he is a very good man, and you know I must be marine officer myself, now since poor Howlet invalided"—(this was the lieutenant of marines)—"so send him with the rest."

"Why, Sir Oliver, the man is exceedingly willing, as we all know, but his stamina is gone entirely, and this he is himself aware of. Indeed this morning he preferred a request to me, which I know is against rule altogether; still, under correction, I promised to make it known to you."

"Out with it—what is it?"

"Simply this, sir—that you would allow him to act as my steward for the cruise, now since poor Jacobson is gone"—

"Why, it is against all rule, as you say, Mr Lan-yard—but I see no great harm in it, if the poor devil be really unable to keep watch—so, at all events, keep him on board in the mean time. We shall bear up, and make sail at noon; and come on board to dinner, if you please, at three."

Old Dick returned with a joyous heart to the Midge—I accompanied him—Mr Marline was the officer of the watch.

"Send all the supernumeraries on board the Gazelle, Mr Marline, bag and baggage, will ye?"

"Ay, ay, sir," responded the master's mate, now acting master of the Midge—"shall we send the wounded, too, sir?"

"Yes, all hands of them." I went down to dress for dinner. When I came on deck again, the men were all ready with their bags, in their clean trowsers and frocks, and well-shaven chins, on the starboard side; while the wounded had crept on deck, and were ranged under the awning on the other.

They had all rallied astonishingly, but poor Lennox, who was miserably weak and ill—he looked as if he were dying. Little Joe Peak came up to the lieutenant, "Am I to go with them, sir?"—"Certainly." The wee mid looked disappointed—and made no answer. Presently he came up to him again, "The men ask if they may give you a cheer, sir?"—"Heaven help us, no—no—we have had nothing to brag off, Master Peak—no—no."

But Dick twigged, on a moment's reflection, what the drift was.

"I say, steward, give the men who are going in the boat a glass of grog a-piece to drink my health." It was done, and the boat shoved off, and was returning for the wounded, when I happened to notice Lennox looking earnestly at me. "Bless me, Lennox, I have forgotten you entirely."

"Do you know if I am to go on board the frigate sir?" said the poor fellow, with a weak voice.

"No, Lennox, not unless you choose, I believe—the commodore has no objection to your acting as steward, agreeably to your wish, until you get strong; so you may remain, if you like."

"Thank you, sir."

I noticed the large tears roll down his cheeks as he turned his emaciated countenance to the ship's side and wept. I was mightily surprised at all this, and mentioned the circumstance to my worthy cousin, who did not seem to understand it either.

"What can you mean by this, my man? No sham sentimentality with me, my fine fellow."

"Oh no, sir—no—I am unused to kindness, sir, and weak enough, God knows; but really, in my present condition, I am unable to do my duty in the frigate."

"Well, has not Mr Brail told you you might stay if you choose?"

"Yes, thank you, sir—you don't know what a load you have taken from my heart, sir."

"What mean you, man—speak out—no humbugging. If you won't answer me—by the powers"—he approached the spot where he lay—the poor wasted lad had fainted. He now called the surgeon, who immediately saw there was no make-believe in the matter, so he had him taken below; and as time and tide wait for no man, we now returned to the frigate to dinner.

I had previously determined in my own mind, taking into account Sir Oliver's ailing condition, to remain in the Midge; more especially as she was bound direct to the port where my chief business lay, trusting

to get down to Jamaica afterwards ; so the first thing I did on reaching Gazelle, was to get the commodore's concurrence to the plan. I had some difficulty in obtaining this ; but finally, after many good advices, he acquiesced ; and we adjourned to the cabin.

Mr Garboard, who was by this time well enough to be out of his cot, and old Sprawl, along with one of the midshipmen, were, with Lanyard and myself, Sir Oliver's guests at dinner.

The thing went on very much as usual—the cloth had been drawn, and during a pause in the conversation, I asked Sir Oliver “ If he knew any thing of Lennox ? ”

“ What—the corporal of marines ? Why, no—I don't know much about him, Mr Brail,—how should I ? ” said he, smiling.

“ I did not expect that you would, Sir Oliver,” replied I, taken a little aback ; “ but he is certainly a very odd creature.” The commodore here rang his bell.

“ Gascoigne, send the serjeant of marines here.”

“ Which, Sir Oliver,” said the man—“ Sergeant Lorimer, or Pigot, sir ? ”

“ Send Serjeant Lorimer here.”

The soldier, in his white jacket and trowsers, black cross belts, round hat, with a white tape band round it, and white cords, or lanyards on each side, fastening the brims up to the crown, like tiny shrouds, appeared at the door ; and facing us, made his salute, as stiff as a poker, putting his hand up to his hat-brim, and swaying about in the narrow door-way, like a statue on a ball and socket.

"Lorimer," said Sir Oliver, "what do you know of Lennox—corporal Lennox?"

"Anan!" said the serjeant, not comprehending the question; "beg pardon, sir, what is your pleasure?"

"Why," said the choleric commodore—"what know ye of Lennox, you numbscull, the marine who is left sick on board of the Midge—where and when did you pick him up?"

"Oh, beg pardon," said the man—"why, Sir Oliver, he enlisted at the depot at Portsmouth about twelve months ago. He had come round in some Scotch steam-boat, and he was then one of the handsomest-looking young chaps I ever se'ed, Sir Oliver; but he seemed always to feel as if the country was too hot to hold him, for he volunteered three times for rather badish frigates, before we were drafted for Gazelle, when you commissioned her. In the small affairs we have had under your honour's eye he has always, when in health, been a most desperate fellow. He seemed to value his life no more as a quid of tobacco—lately he has become a leetle more circumspect, but he is terribly fallen off in bodily health, sir."

"How came he to be made corporal so soon after joining?" said I.

"Easy, sir. He came under my hands at drill; but I found the first day, that the poor fellow, Scotchman though he was, knowed more of his trade than I did myself, sir—and as I hope I never bears malice nor envy against nobody, I could not help advertising Lieutenant Howlett, that as he wanted a corporal

no man was more fitterer for that same than Lennox, and so he made him corporal ; and if your honour wants any penmanship done, now since your clerk is laid up, ne'er a man in the ship, always barring my superiors," here he again touched his cap, " can write running hand like Jack, poor fellow,—and as to spelling—oh my eye."

" Well—well," said Sir Oliver—" but what is his general character ?"

" The steadiest man in the ship, *when on duty*, Sir Oliver—marine or able. He never missed muster in his life. I never saw him drunk or dirty—the only fault I ever had to him is, that sometimes when the men should have been airing themselves in their best on a Sunday forenoon, he has been known to keep them below until eight bells were fine run—extorting them out of the Bible, Sir Oliver."

" Nothing more ?" said Sprawl.

" Yes, he sometimes gives all his grog to his mess-mates for a week at a time, whereby Bill Swig once caught it at the gangway, your honour—and he does gammon in some foreign tongues, now and then, as if he really and truly had at one time or another been somebody, Sir Oliver."

" You say he is a good steady man *on duty*, Lorimer," quoth Sir Oliver—" what may there be peculiar about him, *when below* ?"

The serjeant smiled, and fidgetted about, but seeing his captain waited for him to speak—" Oh, I don't know, Sir Oliver, but he has a many vagaries, and dreams dreams, Sir Oliver—and fancies he sees sights

—and speaks the damnedest nonsense—beg pardon, Sir Oliver—in his sleep.” The commodore laughed, and touched his forehead knowingly with his forefinger. “Your honour has hit it,” said the man, laughing.

“And is this all you know of him?”

“All and whole entirely, Sir Oliver.”

“Very well—here”—

The commodore had filled a very sufficing tumbler of grog, and handed it to the serjeant of marines. The man *now* unbent, stept into the cabin—wiped his mouth with the back of his large brown paw, and then, looking as sheepish as need be, seized the tumbler in his right hand—“Sir Oliver—and gentlemen all”—and swigging it off, he once more raised his hand to the brim of his chapeau—turned round on his heels, and marched out of the cabin.

About six in the evening, I returned on board the Midge, which had hove to, so soon as she noticed the frigate do so. As soon as we got on deck, and the boat was hoisted up, Lanyard desired the gunner, who had the watch, to bear up again in the wake of the commodore, for whom he was to keep a bright look out.

For a week we had beautiful weather, although the wind continued very light, so that we had almost daily communication with the frigate, and had the happiness of seeing even poor Donovan on deck again. As we widened our distance from the abominable coast, all hands seemed to improve astonishingly, so that by the seventh day after we had taken our departure, there was not a sick man in the ship.

The weather had during all this time been invaria-

bly fine, but on this Sunday evening, it had become very much overcast right a-head. Sir Oliver had in the forenoon, at Lanyard's and the youngster's own request, spared him *Mister* Peak, the midshipman already mentioned, a very wicked little Irish rascal, but a nice boy notwithstanding. He now stood beside me on the felucca's deck.

"A very heavy bank that, sir, right a-head as we are steering," said little Joey.

"Very," said I—"but I don't think there is any wind in it, Mr Peak."

Gradually the dark clouds rose up and up, until they reached the zenith—we appeared to be entering into a gigantic black arch—under whose dark shade the frigate, about a mile on our lee bow, had already slid and become undistinguishable.

The breeze was now very light—sufficient to keep the sails sleeping, and no more. Dennis Donovan, who had that morning paid us a visit, to try whether change of *discomforts* might not benefit his health, and I were standing together, leaning our arms on the drum of the capstan, and looking out to windward, endeavouring to detect any indication in the dark sky as to the sort of weather we might expect. I was solacing myself with my cheroot, and Donovan was chewing his cud—quid I mean—when I thought I heard something in the air. "Hush! do you hear nothing?" He suspended his mastication, and I took my cigar out of my mouth, and listened all ear—Dennis all mouth—for I could see, dark as it was, that he gaped, as if he expected to catch the sound by the

tail in his teeth. “ Again—there !”—a faint distant strain of solemn music seemed now to float over head on the gentle night wind, in a low melancholy liquid cadence—increasing like the swell of an Æolian harp, and gradually dying away again, until nothing but the small rushing of the felucca through the water was heard. Startled as I was, still

“ It came o'er my soul, like the sweet south,
Soft breathing o'er a bed of violets.”

“ Benjamin Brail !” quoth the Irishman.

“ Dennis Donovan !” said I.

And there we stood staring at each other as if we had seen a ghost.

“ Pray, Mr Peak,” said old Dogvane, the quartermaster (in the small vessel it was a difficult thing to avoid being an eavesdropper sometimes), “ what do you think of that ?”

“ Poo,” rejoined little Peak, “ the devil, I suppose, is busy aloft.”

“ *He* don't often sing psalms on a Sunday evening, does he, Mr Peak ?” rejoined old Dogvane.

The midshipman laughed.

“ Ay, you may laugh, Mr. Peak—you may laugh—but I don't like them kind of sounds thereaway ; and mark my words, Master Peak, we shall either have a gale of wind within eight and forty hours”—

“ Or no,” rejoined Joey.

“ I say, Donovan, that can't be the band on board the frigate ?” said Lanyard, who now joined us. His senior laughed outright. “ Band—band—why, they might give you a regular *rumpti tumpti*, Dick—but

such a piece of sacred music as that was, is altogether out of their line—besides, it was vocal, man—it was vocal."

The weather astern of us was as yet perfectly clear, but gradually the thickest of the pitchy curtain *lifted* from the horizon on our weather beam, suddenly disclosing the cold, blue star-light sky—which, gradually brightening, with a greenish radiance, gave token that the moon was not far below the horizon, against which the tossings of the dark waves were seen distinctly.

"Hello!—who have we here?" said I, as the black sails and lofty spars of a large vessel, diminished by distance into a child's toy, were hove up out of the darkness into the clear, in strong relief against the increasing light of the lovely background, rolling slowly on the bosom of the dark swell, and then disappearing, as if she had slid down the watery mountain into the abyss whereout she had emerged. Presently the object appeared again; and this time, by the aid of my glass, I made out a stately vessel, gracefully rising and falling on the ever-heaving waters.

Anon, the bright planet, the halo round whose forehead had already lit up the clearing east, emerged, all pure and fresh, from the dark sea, and floated on the horizon like a crystal globe, shedding a long stream of trembling light on the sparkling and tumbling waves. Mr Peak at this instant called out from forward——

"The commodore is showing lights, sir."

"Very well—what are they?"

It was the night signal for a strange sail in the north-east.

"Answer it—but mind you keep the lanterns under the lee of the sail, so that our friend to windward may not see them."

It was done—and I again looked in the direction where we had seen the stranger, but she had suddenly become invisible—the dazzling of the dancing moon-beams on the water preventing our seeing her.

"She must be right in the wake of the moon, sir," quoth Mr Marline; "I cannot make her out now at all."

"Very well," said Lanyard again—"but the *shine* that makes her invisible to us will indicate our whereabouts surely enough to her, for it is glancing directly on our white sails."

I had in my time learned a bucaniering trick or two.—"How thought you ~~she~~ was standing when you saw her last—when ~~you~~ was busy with the commodore's lights?" said I.

"Right down for us, sir."

"Then, Dick, my beauty, if you will take my advice, you will lower away the yard, and haul down the jib."

The suggestion was taken, and we were soon rocking on the dark billows, with our solitary mast naked as a blasted pine.

As I expected, to any one looking at us from windward, we must have become invisible, against the heavy bank of black clouds down to leeward; and, in corroboration of this, the strange vessel gradually emerged from out the silvery dazzle, and glided majes-

tically down the glorious flow of bright moonlight, standing right for us, evidently unaware of our vicinity.

She was not steered so steadily, but that I could perceive she was a ship, sailing dead before it with all sail set to woo the faint breeze ; royals, sky-sails, and studding-sails aloft and alow. Presently it freshened a bit, and she took in her light and steering-sails—she was now about two miles from us.

The sight was beautiful ; and while some of the people were keeping a bright look-out for the commodore down to leeward, the rest of the crew were gazing out to windward at the approaching vessel. I had at no time from the first thought she was a man-of-war, her sails and yards being by no means square enough ; but if I had hesitated at all in the matter, the slow and awkward way in which she shortened sail, must have left no doubt of the fact on my mind.

“ There—there again—what *can* that be ? ” said I involuntarily.

“ Hillo,” sung out several of the crew forward, “ hear you that, messmate—hear you that ? ”

A low, still, most heavenly melody again floated down to us, but louder than before, and died meltingly away as the breeze fell, until it once more became inaudible. Since we had discarded the frigate from our thoughts, the ship to windward was now of course the only quarter from whence the sounds could proceed. I listened again—but all was still—presently the dark outlines of the sails of the approaching vessel became clearer. There was now a long pause, and you might

have heard a pin drop on deck, when the solemn strain once more gushed forth high into the pure heavens. We all listened with the most intense attention. It was the hundredth Psalm—and I could now distinguish the blending of male and female voices in the choir—presently the sound sank again, and gradually died away altogether.

Corporal Lennox was standing near me, indeed so close, that I could not help overhearing what passed between him and one of the quartermasters.

“I say, Peter,” quoth the soldier, “did you ever read about the Covenanters?”

“Anan?” *quod* Peter.

“Have you never read about the Covenanters, my man?”

“Can’t say as I have—what ship did they belong to? they must have been brothers, I suppose—stop—eh!—let me think—why I did know *one* of that name in the water-guard at”—

“Oh man, Peter, you are an unenlightened creature—amaist as much so as the brutes that perish—I hope there may not be much expected o’ ye at the great muster, Peter, when the archangel shall be boatswain’s mate, and all hands shall be piped to answer for their deeds done in the body—yea, when the grey moss-grown grave-stone shall no longer shield the sinner from the glance of the Almighty—I hae a regard for ye though, notwithstanding—but ye’ll forgive me if I say yeer but a puir brute at the best, Peter.”

“Why, Master Lennox,” retorted Peter, “I have

borne more from you, my fine fellow, than I thought I could have done from ere a messmate I have ever had, for you have done me more than one service—but”——

“ *Service, man—wi’ yeer service!* will ye neer gie ower miscaaing his Majestie’s English? But weel a weel, and it may not be the last I will render ye, so nae mair about it, man; I meant nae offence,—and to say sooth, my mind was away among the hill-folk, the puir persecuted remnant whereof my great-grandfather was an unworthy member; and mony a weary nicht did he skirl up the Psalms on the wet hillside, before he was exalted, with the cauld spongy fog* for a mat-trass, and a damp rash bush for a pillow.”

“ Ho, ho!” chuckled Peter at this; “ you are always gammoning about old stories, and book-larning; but I have you now, Master Lennox;—your great-grandfather was *exalted*, was he?—that is hanged, I suppose?”

I was a good deal tickled at this, and listened, in spite of myself, to hear how my Scotch friend would brook this insinuation.

Lennox replied, quite calmly—“ He *was* hanged.”

“ Ha! ha! I have you on the hip now, my master,” shouted Peter.

“ Indeed, man, you are a coorse-minded animal,” responded the corporal. “ I spoke in yae sense metaphorically, and alluded to his reward in Heaven—where I have nae doubt he went—but leeterally, I will no deny, in another; for he was in verity hanged

* Moss.

by that villain Lauderdale in the Lawnmarket, and sang this very hundredth Psalm, that you have heard raised on board that vessel, at the"—

"What, the whole of it?" interrupted honest Peter.

"Ay, the whole of it, from stem to stern, on the scaffold."

Here poor Lennox's voice fell a little, so that honest Peter, thinking that the disclosure of his great-grandfather's *exaltation*, which, in his innocence, he considered he had cleverly wrung from him, was giving him pain, sung out, in what was meant for a consolatory tone—"Never mind, Lennox, man—don't mind; better men have been hanged than your grandfather;—but what was it for, man?"—his curiosity combatting with his kindly feelings—"I dare say something the poor fellow had done in his drink; some unfortunate blow or thrust that rid the world of a vagabond; or a little bit of forgetfulness in signing another man's name for his own, eh?"

"Why, freend Peter," chimed in Lennox, "since ye crack sae choose—wha may *yeer* great-grandfather hae been?—tell me that."

Peter was rather caught. He twisted himself about. "My father I know—I am sure I had a father,—and a grandfather too, I suppose; but as to a great-grandfather"—

"I say, Peter, my man, 'never cudgel yeer brains about it,' as Shakspeare hath it; and never again disparage a man wha can authentically show that he had a great-grandfather, even although he had the misfortune to be hanged, until ye can honestly tell

whether ye ever had a grandfather or no *at all*. But *none* of these brought him to his end, noo since ye *maun ken*."

" Well, well, I hope it was not for stealing," said honest Peter, bearing no malice; " that's a low vice, you knows, Lennox."

" It was not," said the corporal, energetically—
" No, it was because he worshipped God according to his conscience, and refused to bow down before"—

" The strange sail is keeping away, sir, and will go a-head of us, if we don't bear up," sung out Mr Marline from forward.

She was now within a mile of us, or less, rolling heavily on the long black swell. It was once more almost calm.

" Hoist away the sail again," said Lanyard, " and let us overhaul her."

As the white canvass spread out high into the night air, on the long elastic yard, the clear moon shone brightly on it. We became instantly visible to those in the ship; for we could see there was a bustle on board, and heard the sound of pulling and hauling, and the rattling of the cordage: the blocks and gear squeaking, and the yards cheeping against the masts, as they were being braced round. They were making more sail, as if desirous of eschewing our company. We stood on, and presently fired a gun across her bows, as a hint to heave-to; but, in place of its being taken, it was promptly returned; the shot whistling over our masthead.

" Hey-day, Mr Wadding, you had better open the

magazine, if this is to be the way of it," said Mr Lanyard ; " and beat to quarters, Mr Marline, if you please."

" Surely a craft manned by parsons, or singing men and women, don't mean to fight?" said little Joe Peak to Mr Marline.

" Hush, Joe, will ye," quoth his senior ; " don't you see the captain is on deck? But, *entre nous*, my lad, if this Psalm-singing don't stir up a gale of wind by four-and-twenty hours from this, I shall be exceedingly surprised."

" Poo, poo ; you have been taking a leaf out of Dogvane's book," quoth Joey.

All seamen, it is well known, have a great repugnance to sail with a parson on board—that is, if he be a tortoise, or stray land parson. As for the regular chaplain—Lord love you, he is altogether another kind of affair—being his Majesty's officer in one sense.

When we had again made sail, our friend Peter set to Lennox once more—" You are above them things, I knows, Lennox ; but I thinks along with Mr Peak there, that these Psalm-singing folks will bring us bad weather, as sure as a gun."

" Hoot, nonsense, mony a skart has skirled, and naething followed. Peter, ye're a superstitious fule ; now, why should a clergyman being on board prove a bad omen? Why should a storm arise because a priest is part of the cargo?"

" Oh!" persisted Peter, " it depends on the kind of *character* he may have. If he is no better than he

should be, why I don't care if we shipped a dozen on 'em, but a real virtuous clergyman is a very dangerous subject to the barky and all on board, take Peter Quid's word for it."

" Ay, indeed ?" said Lennox—" and the greater rogue the greater safety—the more excellent his character the greater danger ?"

" Just so," quoth Callaghan, the Irishman whose tobacco had so plagued him when he was wounded ; and who now came on deck with his head tied up, to see the fun, and lest he " should miss any fighting," as he said ; " and I'll give you a sufficing rason why it should be so. You sees, ould Davie, I don't mean Mr Sprawl, is always on the look-out for betterer sowl's, as it were—why, he cares no more than a frosted potato for such poor devils—such sure bargains as Jack Lennox and me, now"—

" Speak for yourself, friend Callaghan," rejoined the corporal.

" And so I do, to be sure ; and you being a friend, I am willing to speake for ye too, ye spaldeen ; so be asy—as I was saying, he can have bushelsful such as we, whenever he chooses, as regular as we gets our own grog and grub. We are his every-day meals ;—but when he can catch a parson—ah—he puts himself to some trouble to catch a parson ; and so, you see, if you have not a regular snifter before to-morrow night, may I"—

" Silence there," sung out Lanyard, not quite satisfied apparently with having so long played the eaves-dropper. " Silence, and go to stations, will ye ?"

Every thing again relapsed into its former calm ; the vessel approached ; and to prevent her crossing our forefoot, as she came down within pistol shot, we edged away, and finally bore up almost alongside of her.

“ Ho—the ship, a-hoy !”

“ Hillo !”

“ What ship is that ?”

This was answered Scotch fashion—“ What felucca is that ?”

Lanyard did not choose to stand on ceremony, so to save bother, he replied, “ The tender to his Britannic Majesty’s ship Gazelle. So heave-to, and I will send a boat on board of you.”

The strange sail, however, kept all fast, and stood steadily on his course.

“ If you don’t shorten sail, and round-to, I will fire into you ?”

Another long pause.—Dick’s patience was fast evaporating ; and, “ All ready with the gun, there ?” was already on his tongue, when the stranger again hailed.

“ What ship is that down to leeward, there ?”

“ The Gazelle,” was the answer.

The skipper now saw that, whether we were honest or not, he had no chance of escape, especially as he perceived that the Midge sailed nearly two feet for his one ; so he immediately shortened sail and hove-to, and the next minute saw Señor Ricardo and my beautiful self, all by way of a lark, alongside. When we got on deck, we found the ship in a regular bustle—three carronades had been cast loose, round which the

scanty crew, mustering some thirty hands, were clustered ; but oh, the labyrinth of slack ropes, and the confusion altogether, and the ill-trimmed sails, and the danger to the shins from misplaced wadding tubs, stray sponges and rammers ; not to forget the vagaries of three or four twelve-pound shot, that had fetched way, and were pursuing their devious courses at every roll, across and athwart, forward and back again.

Two stout-looking young fellows, with drawn cutlasses, had stationed themselves at each side of the gangway as we entered.

“ Why didn’t you heave-to, sir, at once ? ”

“ Because, sir,” said the master of the vessel, whom Lanyard had addressed, “ I had serious suspicions as to who or what you were. I now see I was mistaken ; and a sure proof that I was so, you appear not to have taken offence at my incredulity, in the first instance.”

“ Well—well,” said the lieutenant, “ what ship is this ? ”

“ The *Hermes*, bound for the Cape of Good Hope, with an assorted cargo. Will you please step below, and look at my papers, sir ? ”

We descended, and on finding myself in the cabin, I was somewhat startled to perceive that the two men who had done us the honour to receive us with naked weapons at the side, had followed us below. The eldest and tallest of the two was about thirty, as near as I could judge ; a dark, sunburned, very powerful man, with a determined, but not unpleasing expression. The other was nearly as tall, but slighter, and

of a very pale complexion. Both were dressed in white trowsers and check shirts, without any other garment whatever. Who they were I could not divine. They were not seamen, I at once made out.

"Oh, passengers, I suppose."

I was much struck with the very handsome figure of the master of the vessel, who sat down directly opposite me.

There was a lamp burning brightly overhead, that hung down between us over the table, which cast a strong light on his face and figure.

He might have been fifty years of age ; very bald, but what little hair he had, curled short and crisp over his ears, as black as jet, as were his eyebrows and whiskers, without the blemish of one single grey hair. He was dressed in white trowsers, a check shirt, and blue jacket. His features were remarkably fine ; teeth good ; eyes dark and sparkling ; and a forehead high and broad.

The cabin appeared to be exceedingly comfortably, without being gaudily furnished ; and there were several shawls, and sundry miscellaneous gloves and bonnets lying about the lockers, indicating that there must be lady passengers on board.

We found all the papers right, so far as the cargo went, and then glanced at the list of the passengers. There was the Reverend William This, and the Reverend James That, and the Reverend Thomas Such-a-Thing ; and Mrs So-and-so, and Mrs Thingamy.

"I see you are busy with the list of my passen-

gers ;—but won't you take a little wine and water, sir ?”

I bowed, and the steward immediately placed wine and glasses, and some biscuit, on the table.

“ They are missionaries, sir, for the back settlements at the Cape. Moravians, I believe, you call the sect they belong to ; but I care little for the denomination which their peculiar tenets have acquired for them, so long as I can say this, that a more amiable set of people I never have come across, sir ; and, man and boy, I have been to sea in passenger-carrying merchant craft for six-and-thirty years.”

The lieutenant now, at his request, gave the correct latitude ; when, finding himself farther to the eastward than he expected, he asked leave to keep company with us for a couple of days, as a protection against the visits of the contraband traders. Having got the course we were steering, which, he said, would suit, although a little too westerly for him, we rose to depart, and wished the skipper good-night.

“ It is dead calm now, sir,” said he ; “ possibly you will do me the favour to allow me to introduce you to my *family*, as I call my Moravian friends. They are all at tea, I believe, in the round-house, on deck.”

As I stepped off the ladder, I saw that he was right, that it was, in fact, quite calm ; and there was the little Midge, close to, with her long taper yard wallopping about, and the sail giving a floundering flap every now and then, as she rolled about on the heave of the sea.

"Mr Marline" (we were so near that there was no use for a speaking-trumpet), "keep close to, if you please—I will be on board presently."

"Ay, ay, sir."

Lanyard then turned to mine host, and followed him towards the round-house, which was built on deck, with a gangway all round it, along which the tiller ropes led; the wheel being situated under the small projecting canopy facing the quarterdeck.

All had been dark when we came on deck—the only light being the one in the binnacle, but now the round-house was very handsomely lit up by two lamps hung from the roof, which shone brilliantly through the open door and the two windows that looked towards the quarterdeck. The wheel, with the sailor who was steering standing by it, was right in the wake of the stream of light from the door. It was striking to see his athletic figure, leaning on the rim of the wheel, his right hand grasping one of the lower spokes, while the left clutched the uppermost, on which his cheek rested; the jerk of the rudder in the calm twitching his head first on this side, then on t'other.

But the scene within—I shall never forget it. The round-house was a room, as near as might be, sixteen feet long, and about fourteen feet broad at the end next the quarterdeck, narrowing to ten feet wide at the aftermost part. On each side there were two sofas, and between each of the sofas two doors, that appeared to open into state-rooms;—two shorter sofas ran across the afterpart, fronting you as you entered; and placed between these two aftermost sofas,

there was a neat brass cabin grate, now tastefully filled with a bouquet of artificial flowers. In the centre of the cabin there was a long table, on which stood a tea equipage, the grateful vapour whirling up from a massive tea-pot.

A venerable-looking old man, dressed in a large grey frieze night-gown, with a large velvet cap on his head, from beneath which long white locks escaped and spread over his shoulders, sat directly fronting the door on one of the sofas that ran athwart ships.

He had been reading apparently in a large Bible, that now lay closed before him, with one of his elbows resting on it, and on which his spectacles lay. I had never seen a more benign eye, and his serene high features, whose healthy hue betokened a green old age, were lit up into the most bland and beneficent expression, as with lips apart, disclosing a regular set of teeth, he smiled on a darling little half-naked cherub of a child about two years and a half old, that sat on the table beside him, playing with his white hairs.

He was a lovely little chubby fellow ; a most beautiful fair-skinned and fair-haired boy, with no clothing on but a short cambric shift, bound at the waist with a small pink silk handkerchief. His round fat little arms, and little stumpy legs, were entirely naked ; even shoes he had none, and in his tumblifications he seemed utterly to have forgotten that he had no drawers on. But the glorious little fellow's head !—his glossy short curling fair hair, that frizzled out all round his head as if it had been a golden halo floating over his sunny features —his noble, wide

spreading forehead—his dark blue laughing eyes—his red ripe cheeks, and beautiful mouth, with the glancing ivory within!—Oh, I should weary all hands were I to dilate on the darling little fellow's appearance; for, next to a horse or a Newfoundland dog, I dote on a beautiful child. “Shall I ever have such a magnificent little chap?” burst from my lips against my will. “I hope you may, sir,” said a calm, low-pitched female voice, close to me.

The soft musical sounds startled me more, under the circumstances, than a trumpet note would have done. I turned to the quarter from whence they proceeded, and saw two young women seated on one of the sofas at the side. The eldest might have been about five-and-twenty; she was very fair—I ought rather to write pale, all mouth and eyes as it were—I mean no disparagement, because the features were good, but only to convey the impression of them on my mind at the time. Her skin seemed so transparent, that the blue veins were traceable in all directions over her bosom and neck and forehead; while her nose was a little—not red—but *fresh* looking, as if she had been weeping, which she had not been. A fine mouth, forehead, and strong well-defined dark eyebrows, over-arching such eyes!—black, jet black, and flashing through their long dark fringes.

Oh, what a redeeming virtue there is in a large swimming dark eye—black, if you please, for *choice*—hazle, if black cannot be had, for *effect*; but for *love*! heavens, and all the heathen gods and goddesses, give me the deep deep ethereal blue—such blue, so darkly

pure, as you might cut out of the noon-day sky within the tropics, about a pistol-shot from the gaudy sun, which must be at the moment eclipsed by a stray cloud, had up from the depths of old ocean expressly for the nonce. One can look into the very soul of *such* a woman with *such* an eye ;—ay, and tell whether or no your own beautiful miniature be painted on the retina of her heart—that's a bull, I conceive, but my mother's Kilkenny blood will peep forth in despite, now and then ; but your dark fine-flashing black sparklers —oh, *Diable !* they look into *you*, my fine fellow, instead of your spying into *them*, which is sometimes mighty *inconvenient* ; and then the humbug of the “eye of the gazelle !” His lordship's gazelle blinker, so soft and yielding, and all the rest of it !—poo, I would rather that my wife, Mrs Benjie Brail, *when I get her*, had a glass eye ; a regular pair of prisms from old Dolland's in St Paul's Churchyard, than the gazelle eye of his lordship's favourites—such an eye would not long have *glowered* out of the head of an honest woman, take my word for it.

Where have I got to ? where the deuce left I off ? Oh—the beautiful eyes of the fair person, whose sweet voice had startled me. Her hair, dark and shining, was shaded off her forehead Madona-like ; and she wore a most becoming, but very plain white muslin cap, with two little lace straps, that hung down loose on each side of her face, like the scale defences attached to the helmets of the French *grenadiers à cheval*. Heaven help me with my similes, a beautiful demure woman, and a horse grenadier ! She was dressed in a

plain black silk gown, over which she wore a neatly embroidered white apron ; but from the ostentatious puffing out of the white cambric handkerchief that she held in her fair clasped hands, with their blue meandering veins, I perceived, if she were the mother of the beautiful boy—and here the murder of my description is out at last—that a second edition of him was printed off, and nearly ready for publication.

But the figure that sat next her instantly riveted my attention. She was a tall sylph-like girl of nineteen or thereabouts, with laughing features, not so perfect as the elder female's, to whom she bore a striking resemblance, and long flowing ringlets, that wandered all over her snow-white neck and bosom, disdaining even the control of a ribbon or band of any kind. She was dressed in some grey homespun looking stuff, but neither of the ladies wore any, the smallest ornament whatever.

"Is that your child, madam ?" said I, to the eldest female. It was—and the patriarchal old man, with true natural good breeding, at once broke the ice.

"The eldest of these ladies, sir, is my daughter—the youngest is my niece and daughter-in-law."

I made my respective bows.

"This gentleman is my son-in-law and nephew, and this is my son."

He here turned to the two young men, who were by this time rigged in the same kind of coarse woollen frocks that their *ancient* wore—they had followed us into the round-house, but quiet and sober as they now seemed, I could not dismiss from my recollection the

demonstration they had made when we first came on board. *Then* they seemed pugnacious enough, and by no means such men as would, when smitten on one cheek, have calmly turned the other to the smiter. They appeared sensible, strong-minded persons from their conversation; not very polished, but apparently very sincere. Dick and the skipper being by this time knee deep in nauticals, the old man addressed me.

“ You see, sir, since it has pleased the Almighty that we should be outcasts from the homes of our fathers, still, like the patriarchs of old, we have not gone solitarily forth. But tea is ready, I see; will you be seated, sir? Captain Purves, can you prevail on him to be seated?”

The meal went on pretty much as usual—the contrast to me, between my present position and late mode of life, was very great. To find myself thus unexpectedly in a family circle, after more than six months of continual turmoil and excitement, bewildered me, and at the same time softened my heart; and the ancient feelings of my boyhood—the thousand old kindly reminiscences of my own house and home began to bud like flowers in a hot-bed. When I looked on the calm contented virtuous group around me, and reflected that one short half hour was to separate us for ever, I could have wept—a womanly melting of the heart came over me, so that I could scarcely speak.

“ Will you go with us, sir?”—said at length the beautiful boy, gradually edging across the table, until the darling little fellow slid into my lap with his little plump legs.

"No, my dear boy, I cannot go with you—but heaven bless you, my beautiful child—bless you,"—and I kissed his little downy peach-like cheek.

"You are very sorry to leave me," said the urchin.

"Why, my little man," while an indescribable feeling crept over me, "how do you think so?"

"Because I see one big tear in your eye—ah, dere —him pop down, like hot water, on my hand—oh! you must either have been bad boy dis morning, or you are crying because you are going to leave me."

I blushed to the eyes at this womanish weakness having been detected by the little innocent.

The calm still continued, but time wore on—and anxious to get back again, we rose—"A pleasant voyage to you, captain."

"Thank you, sir."

I looked at the old man who sat opposite—"I also wish you and yours a good voyage, sir,"—and I held out my hand—he shook it cordially.

"May God bless you, sir,"—and then turning to the lieutenant—"I respect your service, sir, but I have seen some roughness among young officers too, when the ships in which I have sailed, in my several voyages, have been boarded by men-of-war's boats; therefore your gentleness has been more grateful."

Don Ricardo bowed.

Willing to protract the pleasure of being in such society as long as I decently could, I remained standing.

"The night is calm," continued the old man, "and Captain Purves says your vessel is close to us; will you not sit down, and give us the pleasure of your

company a little longer? We are so recently from England, that we may be able to give you some news that may be gratifying." We did so, and the captain ordered wine and water in. By this time the little boy, who had been playing with the handle of my sword, for I must needs be rigged boarder-fashion, and looking up and prattling in my face, fell fast asleep on my knee, when his mother placed him on the sofa. The conversation went round, the young men opened, and soon convinced me that they were exceedingly well-informed, and quite up with the enlightenment of the age; while both the ladies in their calm quiet way, especially the young matronly female, evinced a fixedness of purpose, and a determination to persevere in their desolate pilgrimage, with a perfect knowledge of its privations—indeed, I may write dangers, that I could not have believed possible in tender women. I have seldom spent a couple of hours more pleasantly; the conversation turning chiefly on recent occurrences in England. At length, the old man said—" You have been already informed by the captain, that we are missionaries bound for the Cape. My son-in-law and my daughter have been backwards and forwards twice, and know from personal experience the extent of the sacrifice they make in devoting themselves to the good work. My son there, and my niece, to whom he has lately been married, have never been to the station before, but they are fully aware of all that they may be called on to suffer—as for me, I am now going back to my tent in the wilderness—to utter banishment from all the elegances and comforts of civilized life, and

with small prospect of ever revisiting the land of my fathers again. But I shall be buried beside my wife, under the same orange-tree, where she rests from her labours, after having been my helpmate, and, under God, my greatest earthly comfort, during my ministry amongst the heathen, for fifteen long years. Yes, heaven knows, my cup of sorrow, when she fell asleep, was full to overflowing—for upwards of six months all was quiet in the settlement—upwards of fifty families had domiciled themselves within our enclosure ; and having mastered the native dialects, we had great hopes of making rapid progress, in not only enlightening the poor creatures by whom we were surrounded as to the things concerning their everlasting welfare, but in inducing them to adopt many of our civilized customs : for the care they had seen us bestow on the cultivation of the soil, and the success that had crowned our labours, seemed to have made a deep impression. I had left every thing quiet and peaceable, one afternoon, to look at some springs that I had set for wildfowl, when I was alarmed by a loud shouting in the direction of the station. I ran back, and found the very savages, who had, as we thought, become attached to us, and had dwelt for so long amongst us, in the act of rifling our barn, and carrying off the grain. My nephew and three other young missionaries were doing all they could to prevent it. On being joined by me, we were compelled to have recourse to our fire-arms, and eventually, after wounding one or two of our deluded assailants, succeeded in clearing the enclosure of them. But my poor wife's nerves—she had been ailing for many

months—had received so severe a shock, that she never held her head up afterwards—she died within the week."

" And after all that you have suffered—do you still persist in returning ?" said I. " What a sacrifice ! I can scarcely conceive any case where so great a one is called for."

He cut me short—

" Young man—notwithstanding all I have told you, which yet falls short of the reality, I go on my way rejoicing—I may be *called* an enthusiast, and I may *be* an enthusiast, but I have made my election ; and although I am but as the voice of one crying in the wilderness—although as yet our ministry amongst the poor benighted beings amongst whom our lot is cast, has been but as water spilt upon the barren sand, still, with the entire consciousness of the value of what I forego, I cheerfully sacrifice all the usual objects of man's ambition, and obey what I know to be the call of the Almighty, for it is borne in on my heart, and go forth, me and mine, come what may, to preach glad tidings of great joy to those who dwell in darkness ; in the perfect conviction that, if we miss our reward here, we shall assuredly find it hereafter."

I know that missionaries of all classes have had their sincerity called in question, and there may be hypocrites amongst them as well as other men ; but I would ask this simple question—what stronger attestation, speaking of them in the general, can they give to the purity of their intentions, than by thus devoting themselves, mind, body, and estate, to the service

of their Great Master, in the fearless way in which they do? No man is a stauncher friend to the Church, as by law established, than I am, nor has a more thorough detestation of cant, in all its shades and stages, than I have; and I remember gloating over some savage articles in the Edinburgh Review, in its palmy days, when that needle of a body, wee Jeffrey, was at his best, wherein a cargo of poor missionaries were scarified most awfully; but experience and years have brought thought and reflection with them, as they often do to ancient maidens, who at forty, loup like a cock at a grosart (another bull) at the *homo* they turned up their lovely noses at at twenty; and before I would *now* hold these self-devoted men in contempt, or disparage their zeal, or brand them as illiterate hypocrites, I shall wait until I see the wealthier, and more learned of our divines, gird themselves for their forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness, with equal calmness and Christian courage, and go up in the glorious panoply of the apostle which is so often in their mouths, amidst their silken pulpit cushions, to grapple with the fierce passions and prejudices of the naked savage, and encounter the numberless perils of the desert, with the resolution and single-mindedness of these despised Moravians. As to hypocrisy—all hypocrites aim at the attainment of some worldly advantage, because they know they cannot deceive God; but I would ask their fiercest defamers, what temporal blessing blossoms around their dry and sandy path, or within the whole scope of their dreary horizon, that they could not have compassed in tenfold exuberance

at home, even as respectable trades-people? And as to their being enthusiasts, that is easily settled; no man can thrust himself permanently forth from the surface of society, for good or for evil, without being an enthusiast of some kind or another—at least this is the creed of Benjie Brail.

“Madam,” said I to the youngest female, “you have never been to those countries—to the station, as your father calls it? I know *you* have never yet been exposed to its privations?” I noticed her husband smile, and nod to her, as much as to say, “Tell him.”

“No,” said she—“it cannot, however, be worse than I have painted it to myself, from *his* description”—looking across at the old gentleman with an affectionate smile—“But I hope I shall be strengthened, as my cousin has been, to endure my privations, and whatever may befall, as becomes a Christian, and the wife of a sincere one.”

I was told by the captain, that the greater part of his cargo consisted of implements of husbandry; and that to their heavenly calling they had added that of a competent knowledge of all the useful arts of agriculture; so that, wherever such a virtuous family was planted, the savages who surrounded them would not only have their mental darkness dispelled, but their temporal condition improved, and their wants more amply supplied. We had now no farther apology for remaining. I rose; the clash of my cutlass against the chair awoke the sleeping child. He opened his blue eyes where he lay on the sofa, and looked up;

presently he stretched forth his little hands towards me—I stooped down over the blessed infant, and kissed his forehead.

“Good-night,” he said, “good-night, and be good boy like me.”—A tear stood in my eye, for the soul of me, I could not have helped it.

I again shook hands with the old man. And as I was turning to take my leave of the other members of this most interesting family, he placed his hands on my head.

“Young man, we thank you for your visit, and your urbanity—our meeting has been like an oasis in the desert, like a green spot in a dry parched land—and we shall pray for thee to Him ‘whose way is in the sea, and whose path is in the waters, and whose footsteps are not known.’”

I had no heart to speak—so after a long pause—

“My sons,” said the patriarch, “we are about concluding our Sunday evening’s service—stay a few minutes longer.” Seeing I hesitated, and looked towards Lanyard, he addressed himself to him.—“It is no great boon to concede this to *us*, whom in all human probability you shall never meet again.”

We bowed, and immediately the whole party stepped forth into the air, and formed a circle on the quarter-deck round the capstan. Every thing was silent—presently the old man said a low murmuring prayer of thanksgiving—there was another solemn pause—when all at once they chanted the following magnificent lines of the cvii. Psalm, so beautifully fitted to our situation :—

“ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters ;

“ These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep,

“ For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.

“ They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths : their soul is melted because of trouble.

“ They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end.

“ Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

“ He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

“ Then are they glad because they be quiet ; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

“ Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness.”

I once more wished them a good voyage. Lanyard was by this seated in the boat, and stepping to the gangway, I turned in act to descend the ship’s side, with a hold of the manrope in one hand. I found the whole group had followed me, and stood round in a semicircle ; even my glorious little fellow was there, sound asleep in his mother’s arms ; and as the lantern cast its dim light on their mild countenances, and lit up their figures, and the clear pale moon shed a flood of silver light over all, I descended into the boat, and standing up in the stern sheets, again wished them a prosperous voyage. We now shoved off, as for myself, with a softened heart, and fitter to have died, I hope, than I was when the sun set.

Presently the lights on board were extinguished, and I could no longer see the figures of my friends ; but still the low murmur of their voices was borne towards me on the gentle breeze, until a loud “ yo, heave oh,” echoed amongst the sails, and drowned

them ; while a rattling and cheeping of the gear, and the hollow thumping of the men's feet on the deck, and the groaning of the mainyard against the mast, as it was being braced round, indicated that the tall ship had once more bore up on her moonlight course.

* * * * *

I was once more on board of the Midge.

“ Ha, ha, Master Benjamin Brail, who would have thought there was so much sentimentality in your composition,” said I to myself ; that is, said *every-day Benjie* to the ethereal, weeping and wailing, and very nonsensical Benjamin as aforesaid. “ My eye, had old Bloody Politeful seen me doing the agreeable and pathetic, amongst a covey of male and female methodist clergymen and clergywomen ; but *n'importe*, Dick is a quiet going fellow and wont peach, so keep your own counsel, my lad.”

“ I say, steward,”—quoth Lanyard, this was Lennox’s first night of holding office,—the other functionary *pro tem.* having subsided into his real character of landsman—“ light the lamp in the cabin, do you hear ? and bring me a glass of grog. Where is Mr Donovan ?”

“ Below, and asleep in bed, sir.”

“ Very well. Mr Marline, make sail, and run down to the commodore, and keep close in his wake, if you please.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

We descended.

“ Fetch the salt beef also, Lennox.”

It was done. Were I a king, and fool enough to

patronise suppers on *shore*—at sea, it is altogether “*une autre chose*”—my sole food at that meal would be a piece of capital virgin mess beef, that had been boiled the day before, but never a knife stuck into it until served up, with a coarse, crisp, brown biscuit, and a glass of cold grog after it—ay, you may turn up your nose at this, my fine fellow, but better men than you have agreed with me.

“ That is very well mixed, steward, very cool,” said I swigging off horn No. I. “ By the way, Lennox, have you got the new philtre, the Barbadoes dripstone, at work ? ”

“ Yes, sir.”

“ Ah, I thought so ; was that the water you made that glass of grog with ? ” Sinner that I was, I knew as well as he that it was not.

“ No, sir, we have not used the water yet.”

I was sawing away, and munching the beef and biscuit aforesaid, all this while, most resolutely. “ No ! ” said I ; “ should like to try the water ; make me the smallest taste of grog in the world with it, the least drop—very pure and cool—capital water, I declare—rather too strong, Lennox, fill up the tumbler if you please ; so—ah—too much man—it is if any thing too weak *now* ; ” here a little dash of spirits—“ so”—and chuckling to myself that I had thus smuggled a second glass of grog in defiance of conscience, I desired the man to make down my bed, and prepared to turn in. El Señor Teniente had also been making very good use of his time, and chuckling to himself at my colloquy with the marine. “ And here, Lennox, tell Mr

Marline to call me if the wind changes, or any thing occurs worth reporting ; and take the skylight off if you please.” I now began to undress, and Lennox had returned to help me. The cool water had a surprising effect ; my spirits suddenly became buoyant beyond all belief ; so, after various *churmings*, I broke forth into involuntary song, as the poets say—

“ ‘ Estoy un hombre chico,
Mas contento soy que rico,
Y mi buque es un zapato.’

“ My slippers—thank you—oh what a lovely boy—
‘ Con mono para patron’—
nightcap—what a glorious little man it was—

‘ El piloto es uno gato ;
Y su rabo es el timon.’

‘ Estoy un hombre chico,
Mas contento soy que rico,
Tol de rol, lol di rol.’”

Little Benjamin, having by this manœuvre gotten half-*fou*, vanisheth into his *cavey*.

Here Dennis Donovan stuck his head out of a side-berth. “ Why, Lanyard—Lanyard, I say.”—Dick was already in his berth, and sound asleep. “ That fellow, now, tumbles into his sleep like a pig into the mire—all of a heap—Lennox.”

“ Here, sir.”

“ What howling is that—Whose pig’s dead, Lennox ? ”

“ It’s Mr Brail singing, sir.”

“ Singing ! —singing ! —and is it *singing* he calls it ? ”

CHAPTER IX.

FOUNDERING OF THE HERMES.

I WAS dreaming of the party I had so recently left, and again I was confabulating with the mild placid women, and the fair child was also there. Oh, who can appreciate the delights of female society like the poor devil who has been condemned, month after month, to the gruff society of great *he* men on ship-board, and whose horizon has during all that time been the distant meeting of sea and sky! “Hillo, Brail, my boy—Brail.”

“What is that—who the deuce hails so uproariously?” quoth I, more than half asleep; “why, what *is* the matter?”

“Oh, not a great deal,” rejoined Donovan, from his berth at the opposite side of the small cabin; “only you snore so confoundedly loud that I could get no sleep for your trumpetings, Benjie; and as you spoiled my rest very sufficiently last night, I thought I would take the liberty of paying you off in the morning. But, Benjie, heard you ever any thing like that?”

“Like what?” said I.

“Why, like the noise of the rain on deck, just now.” I listened, and perceived a low rushing noise, that

gradually increased, until the sound appeared to be produced by a cataract of peas pouring down on the deck above.

"There's a shower for you, Master Brail—when heard you such another?"

"Seldom, I confess—seldom—but why *have* you startled me in this way, Donovan?—if it should rain pike-staves and old women—I cannot help it."—*Snore.*

No rest for the wicked, however, for Lanyard now awoke, and began to don his garments as fast as he could. During which operation, he stumbled violently against my berth, which fairly wakened me. "Why, Dick, where away in such a hurry this fine morning?"

"On deck, my lad—on deck,—but how it does tumble down, to be sure!"

"On deck?—Don't, Dick, do that thing now—don't—what if the lightning should mistake you for a rusty conductor, man?"

He laughed as he vanished up the ladder, and once more I was falling over, when I was most effectually roused by my troublesome chum, Master Dennis Donovan, whose voice could scarcely be heard through the rushing of another heavy shower on the hollow deck overhead. But this time he was addressing some one on deck, and from where I lay I could see up the companion ladder.

"I say, Mr Peak" (the little midshipman), "Mr Peak, how does the weather look?"

It was some time before Joey heard him, from the noise of the rain; at length, he knelt down, and in-

clined his ear on the head of the small ladder, swathed in a large boat-cloak, with the water running off the snout of his cap in a small spout.

"Any one speaking below in the cabin there?" quoth Joey.

"Yes," said I; "what does the weather look like?"

"Very black, sir, all round, but no wind as yet—it rains a little now and then, sir."

"Rains a *little* now and then—Oh Lord!" ejaculated Donovan; "where is the commodore?"

"About a mile on the starboard bow."

"And the ship?"

"Close to, astern of us, sir."

"The swell seems heavy," continued I.

"Very, sir—it has been increasing during the whole of the watch; the ship you boarded yesterday evening is rolling awfully heavy."

Here some one from aft called to little Peak, but I could not make out what the voice said—"How do you think so?" answered the midshipman. The man said something in reply, but still I could not distinguish the words.

"I fear," said Joey now, "the merchantman has sprung something aloft, sir—there is a great bustle on board of her—there, there, her fore-topgallant-mast is gone."

Anxious to see what had befallen the ark of my interesting friends, I rose and dressed as fast as I could, and was in the act of going on deck, when another tremendous thunder plump came down with even greater fury than before. I waited until it was

over, and by this time the day began to break. When I got on deck the sky was very lowering, and the sea as black as pitch ; and although the increasing light proved that the sun was not far below the horizon, yet there was not the smallest clear streak in the east to be seen. The whole vault of heaven was ink-black, and I was startled by the clearness with which the undulations of the rapidly increasing swell, and the hulls and rigging of the two ships, could be seen. The frigate had her three topsails, foresail, and jib set, and rolled so heavily that she appeared to be dipping her yardarms alternately in the water. She had sent down topgallant yards and royal masts, and I could see through the glass the people busy in lowering the studding-sails out of the tops, so for her I had no fear ; but the merchantman astern had either been caught by the suddenness with which the sea had risen, or the scantiness of her crew had prevented her taking the precautions rendered necessary by the threatening appearance of the weather, in proper time ; for her main and mizen royal masts were still up, her topgallant sails still set ; and altogether, from the evident confusion on board, now increased from the accident already alluded to, it was clear to me, that if any sudden squall were to overtake her before she had time to shorten sail, she would be caught all of a heap.

As the morning lightened, the Gazelle, the instant that flags could be seen, telegraphed to send a boat on board the damaged vessel ; and the word was accordingly passed.

"I say, Dennis, I think I will go on board myself, instead of sending any of the boys."

"As you please, Lanyard," quoth the lieutenant, who was by this time up and shaving on deck, in a very picturesque costume certainly—"As you—oh, confound you, you have made me cut myself—bless me, what a gash! Give me some felt off the top of my hat, steward."—He might as well have gleaned after an Irish tinker.—"But were I you," continued he, "I would trust some one else—confound this bleeding. Look at the weather, man—look at the weather, and the air."

The air indeed was hot and sultry beyond all my former experience at the same hour of the four and twenty; and Lanyard, I saw, began to have great doubts as to the propriety of sending a boat at all. He was about telegraphing to this effect, when, to the southward of us, a heavy shower fell perpendicularly from the surcharged clouds, in a grey column—"You are mistaken; there will be no wind, for you see how even-down the rain falls yonder," said Dick to Donovan, when he saw this.

"Well, well, man, since you *will* go—bless me how I have cut my chin!" as putting his head down the companion he roared out "Steward, why don't you bring the felt?"

"I can't scrape a *pile* off it," answered the Scotchman, appearing half-way up the ladder, with the castor in one hand, and a knife in the other.

"Bring the felt, you spalpeen, and no jaw."

Lennox, poor fellow, brought the hat, an old silk

one, worn white at the edges, with the pasteboard frame-work appearing in numberless places—a most shocking bad hat certainly. He held it up to the lieutenant. The Irishman looked at it—“ Hat!—that’s not mine, steward—that’s Mr Brail’s.—Mercy on me, Benjamin, a’nt you ashamed to wear a thing like this?” —It was the vagabond’s own all the while—“ but don’t mind, don’t mind—so good-by, Lanyard—good-by,” as his brother officer stepped into the boat, that was surging about on the fast-rising sea alongside.

“ Stop, you may as well leave me the *kay* of the locker, for your visit will be longer in that same ship, or I greatly mistake, than you bargain for.” He here coolly resumed his shaving, and Ricardo shoved off, taking me with him, as I was rejoiced to have another opportunity of seeing my amiable friends of last evening. We had not pulled above half a dozen strokes, when poor Lennox ran to the side—“ Beg pardon, but a squall is coming, sir—there, sir, in the south-east, where we saw the rain just now.”

I had not time to look round, when Donovan having put up his razor, again sung out—“ By the powers, my lads, but the Scotchman is right; it requires no second sight to prophesy a squall anon.—There, there it *is* coming, sure enough; about ship and come back, Lanyard, or it is as clear as mud that we shall be *minus* your own beautiful self and the boat’s crew in a jiffey, not forgetting Benjie there; and what’s worse, our only boat that will swim.”

It is folly to despise a hint where it is well meant, so in an instant we were on board again, and had just

got the boat run up, when the commodore telegraphed,
“ Keep all fast with the boat.”

Once more it cleared, and the rain ceased in the quarter where we had recently seen it falling with such violence ; but the threatening clouds had sank down right over the spot, and began to boil and whirl in sooty convolutions ; like the blackest and thickest of the smoke, as it leaves the funnel of a steam-boat immediately after the fire is mended.

Under this gloomy canopy, as far in the south-east as we could see, the black waves were crested with white foam ; and a low undefinable hoarse murmur, more like the hollow subterranean sound that precedes the shock of an earthquake than the roar of the ocean, gradually stole down upon us with increasing distinctness.

“ Is that thunder ? ” passed among the men.

“ Thunder ! ” quoth old Dogvane, “ I wish it were, my lads.”

“ It is Davy putting on the coppers for the parsons, and nothing else,” said Drainings.

“ What is that ? ”

The frigate had fired a gun to attract our attention, for the darkness had settled down so thick around us, that we could not have seen flags. She had furled every thing but the close-reefed main-topsail, and reefed foresail. “ A nod is as good as a wink,” said I, as Lanyard called all hands to shorten sail. When we had every thing snug, I looked out in the direction from whence we expected the wind to come. The white crests had increased, and again in the distance

the grey screen descended from the clouds perpendicularly, like a watery avalanche, hiding every thing beyond it from our view.

Presently this column bent at the lower extremity, and drove away to the northward and westward, as if a shallow vein of wind had skimmed furiously along the surface of the sea, while all above was as yet dead calm. But the upper part of the shower gradually assumed the same slanting direction, indicating that the agitation of the air was extending upwards. Suddenly the rain fell right down from the heavens, and once more concealed the agitated billows beyond, like a black curtain dropped before them, indicating that it had again fallen calm.

"Come, I don't think it will end in wind of any consequence to speak of after all," said I.

"Don't you be too sure, my lovely little man," quoth the imperturbable Dennis. "Lanyard, pray have the kindness to furl every inch of canvass, or—fetch me a prayerbook—look there."

I followed the direction in which he pointed; the column of rain was still falling perpendicularly, and as well defined as if it had been a waterspout in reality; when suddenly the lower part of it again inclined to an angle of thirty degrees with the horizon, becoming much more dense and opaque than before. In a few moments the whole pillar of water took the same oblique direction, until it slanted straight as a sunbeam shooting forth from heaven. It continued thick and impenetrable to the sight for the space of half a minute; when, as if scattered by the fury of the

tornado, it suddenly vanished in smoke, and the weather cleared. Right to windward, however, a white line crept down towards us, like dust flying along the road in a stormy day, after a long drought. The roar of the approaching squall increased, as did the swell, which now rolled on in mountainous undulations ; and although it was calm as death where we lay tumbling about, the little vessel groaned and lurched like an evil spirit on his bed of liquid fire ; while the tops of the seas began to break and growl as if the very waves had become conscious of the approaching *tormenta*.—It was now eight o'clock in the morning : but in place of getting lighter the clouds had settled down so darkly that the frigate had to make the night signals with lanterns to heave-to with our head to the southward, until we saw what might turn up. Sharp was the word—we prepared to do so—but before a single rope could be let go, the squall struck us ; and for a minute, notwithstanding all our precautions, the Midge was fairly laid down on her beam ends, and I thought she would have turned keel up ; however, the moment we were enabled to lay her to with her head to the southward and westward, she breasted it like a sea-gull, and, confident in her weatherly qualities, I had time amidst the row to cast a glance at the commodore and the merchantman. The former was lying-to under storm-staysails, rolling and plunging most delightfully, now rising on a heavy sea and making a bow to us, and then descending entirely out of sight—but the poor ship ! All seemed confusion on board of her. Whether it was that they had been deceived by the long time

the wind hung in the distance, and had persuaded themselves that there would be no squall worth dreading after all ; or the accident of losing the fore-topgallant mast had confused them, I cannot tell ; but they had not been able to get in their canvass in time, so that every thing had to be let go by the run when the squall came down ; and the consequence was, that the fore and maintopsails had been fairly blown out of the bolt ropes, and were now streaming straight out in ribbons ; while the foresail, which had stood, laid her over on her beam ends. The crew were, while I looked, endeavouring to set the jib, in order to get her away before the wind ; but a sea at the very moment struck her, washing the boats off the booms, and every thing else that would part company ; for a moment I thought she would never have risen again. But there was another lull, and after having got some way on the vessel, she was brought to the wind, and enabled to heave-to also. This was not of long continuance, however, for it soon began to breeze up again, but steadily ; and I thought, that the puff being over, we should have no more bother, although the heavens continued as black and threatening as ever. The commodore appeared to be of the same opinion, and now made the signal to bear up ; a manœuvre that was promptly followed both by the Midge and the ship, and old Donovan and I went below to breakfast, leaving the lieutenant in command looking out on deck.

“ That chap was nearly caught, Benjie,” said Dennis.

“ Very. Shall I help you to coffee ? ”

“ If you please.”

“ A slice of beef?”

“ Thank you.”

“ Very nearly caught indeed. I hope nothing has happened to her beyond what we saw—beyond the loss of her boats and sails, and foretopgallantmast—she laboured so dreadfully before they could get her before the wind—what a state the poor women on board must have been in !”

“ Terrible,” said Donovan. “ Bad enough for the men, but how I do pity tender women in such a predicament!”—and here he heaved a sigh that would have blown a candle out—“ But you must have lost your heart, Brail, aboard there; you are so awfully sentimental since you returned. Come, now, describe the beauties of the fair creatures—give me as good a notion of them as you can—that’s a good boy.”

“ Why, Donovan, they were both, I mean the ladies, as *unlike* Miss Cathleen, the affianced wife of a certain lieutenant of the navy, the son of widow Donovan, who lives at 1060, Sackville Street, as you can well imagine.”—

Dennis laughed.—“ Why, you have me there, Benjie, sure enough, so”—

Here Lennox interrupted him, as he hastily entered the small cabin. “ The ship has made a signal of distress, sir.”

“ The devil she has !” We both jumped up the ladder as quick as we could. The frigate was steering large, about a mile on our lee-bow. All was right and snug with her; but the ship, that lay about half

a mile abeam of us to windward, had her ensign flying at the mizen-peak, with the union down ; and the signal for a boat flying at the head of the foretopmast.

To send her assistance before the sea went down was utterly impossible ; no boat could have lived for a minute ; so that all we could do was to haul by the wind, and close under her lee quarter. It was still blowing so fresh, that when the master hailed I could not hear him ; but as she lay over, we could see that both pumps were manned, and the gush of *clear* water from the scuppers was a sad indication of what had befallen. I could distinguish the two young missionaries, in their trowsers and shirts, labouring most vigorously amongst the crew ; while the patriarchal old man was holding on by the mizen-rigging, close to the master ; evidently keeping his footing on the deck of the tumbling vessel with great difficulty. Seeing me on deck, he took off his hat, which was instantly blown overboard, and his long grey hairs streamed straight out in the wind. This to me was a moving incident, simple as it may appear to others, and it seemed to affect Donovan also.

“ What a very fine-looking old man he is indeed ! ” said Dennis.

The lady passengers were both below, at least I could see nothing of them. When we closed, the captain hauled down the ensign, and as the flow of water from the pumps seemed to decrease, I began to hope that they were gaining on the leak. Lanyard now steered as near as he could without danger, and hailed, that the moment it was possible he would send

assistance to them. The captain heard him, and made his acknowledgment with his trumpet.

We kept as close to her as was safe the whole forenoon ; and although we saw that the crew were every now and then taking a spell at the pumps, yet they seemed quite able to keep the leak under ; and every thing once more appeared to be going on orderly on board.

“ Come,” said I, to old Shavings the carpenter, who was looking out at her alongside of me, “ if the weather would only moderate a bit, a small touch of your quality, Master Shavings, and a forenoon’s spell of your crew, would set them all to rights again—eh ? ”

The warrant officer turned his quid, and thereby poisoned a dolphin or two, I make no doubt ; by the jet of tobacco juice that he squirted overboard. He then took a long squint before he spoke.

“ I ben’t sartain of that, sir. The water flowing there from the scuppers is cruel clear still, sir. I fear she has started something serious ; I don’t think she would make so much by mere straining.” I began to fear he was right. “ And I sees some signs of a bustle on board again, sir ; there, if the bloody fool of a cook has not set fire to the boarding of the small galley—the caboose they calls it in merchantmen.”

However this accident seemed very trivial, for the man immediately to all appearance extinguished it again ; but the alarming part of it was, that it seemed to have taken place while *he* was taking his spell at the

pumps, a sure indication that the crew were more exhausted than I had allowed for, since they could not spare a hand to look after the fire in such boisterous weather.

The master now came suddenly on deck, and at the same moment a man bolted up the fore-hatchway, and ran aft to him ; showing by the energy of his action that the matter he was communicating was alarming, whatever its nature might be. The pumps were instantly manned again, and after a long spell, I noticed the carpenter sound the well, and then shake his head. At this several of the men threw off their shirts, as if preparing for a tough bout, and set to, working harder than ever ; the water once more gushing out over the ship's side in strong clear jets.

The young missionaries, who had for a minute disappeared, were again on deck, and as well as the master himself now took their spell at the pumps with the crew ; but still there was no rushing nor alarm apparently amongst them. By and by, I noticed the master go aft, and take upon his knee one of the black boards used to shut up the front of the hencoops in bad weather ; on which he appeared to write something, in order, as I conjectured, to communicate with us, as, from the increase of the gale and the sea, there was no use now in attempting to be heard through the trumpet. Evidently with a desire not to alarm the crew, he now quietly slipt the board over the side. On it was written in chalk.

“ THE LEAK IS GAINING ON US.”

The gale now came thundering down with such violence, that we found it necessary to clew up every thing but the close-reefed foresail, and the tremendous seas that roared astern of us made it doubtful how long we should be able to scud. The distress of the ship was fast increasing ; and I noticed that the poor helpless women were now on deck clinging to the old man, whose age rendered it out of the question his attempting to be of any use at the pump.

I shall never forget the group. He was holding on by the mizen-backstay, in a half kneeling position ; the youngest woman was beside him in her night-dress, with her long hair hanging lank down and drenched with rain over her deadly pale features, while her fair and taper naked arms were clasped convulsively round his neck, as she hid her face in his bosom. The elder lady was sitting covered with a boat-cloak on the small bench, that ran along the larboard-side of the companion, with one of her arms over the top of it to keep her in her seat, which she seemed to accomplish with great difficulty, as the labouring ship sweltered about on the boiling sea. A sheep, apparently a pet lamb, stood, or rather staggered about, on the deck beside her, every now and then turning up its innocent face and bleating, and trying to poke its head under her cloak.

A sea at this moment broke over the starboard quarter of the ship, and drenched all of them, washing aside the skirt of the cloak that covered the oldest of the females, and disclosing, alas, alas ! my poor dear little boy, crying in his mother's arms, and stretching and

struggling with his little limbs, as if he had slept through it all, until the very moment when the unruly surge washed him in his nest.

“Mind your helm,” sung out Mr Marline, sharp and suddenly.

I turned to look aft from whence the voice came. Heavens, what a sight! A huge green wave was curling its monstrous crest, like revolving wheels of foam, close aboard of us astern, and pursuing us with a hoarse growl, increasing to a roar, like a sea monster rushing on its prey.

Lanyard had only time to sing out, “All hands, secure yourselves,” when it rolled in over the tafferel, and swept the deck fore and aft, washing boats, hen-coops, spare spars, and every thing that was not part and portion of the solid deck and upperworks, overboard, and submerging us several feet under water.

I thought the little Midge’s buzzing and stinging were for ever over, and that she never would have risen again; but the buoyant little craft gallantly struggled from under the sea, and rose gaily to the surface like a wild-duck shaking her feathers after a long dive; and having hove-to, we soon made capital weather of it again—her strong bows dancing over the advancing surges, as if in contempt, until they hissed away under foot, like serpents foiled in their attack. It was a fearful sight every now and then to look down from the summit of a gigantic sea, on the frigate and shattered merchantman, as they were tossed to and fro beneath us like objects seen from a hillside; and then to feel yourself *sinking*, and see them *rising*,

as you in your turn sank into the trough, until they appeared to hang above you in act to slide down and swamp you, and again to lose sight of them altogether, as a roaring wave rose between us.

Had the felucca been a deep-waisted vessel, she must have inevitably been swamped; but having no ledge or rail whatever, and the hatches having been got on and well secured early in the forenoon, we took little or no water below. We lost one hand overboard, however, more lamented for the time, I believe, than if he had been the best man in the ship. It was poor Dicky Phantom, the monkey, who, when the word was passed for the men to hold on and make themselves fast, seeing them lay hold of ropes, in imitation caught one too; but, alas for Dicky! it was the slack end he had got in his paw, so that the sea washed him overboard like smoke, when, being unable to stand the drag through the water, the poor brute had to let go, and perished miserably.

As his little black gibbering face, with the eyes starting from his head, and his mouth open and grinning, while he coughed and spluttered out the sea water, looked its last at us from the curling ridge of a wave, a general “Ah! there goes poor Dicky Phantom,” burst from all hands.

The ship had also hove to; but in the few minutes that had passed since I had last seen her, her condition was clearly much altered for the worse.

The crew had knocked off from the pumps, and several, I could see, were employed casting loose the hen-coops, spare spars, and every thing that would

float; while the greater part appeared absolutely insane, and rushed about the deck stretching out their hands towards us with imploring faces, as if we could have helped them; while others, alas, alas! were drunk—brutally, bestially drunk—and grinned and gibbered, and threatened us with their fists.

It was indeed a humiliating and a heart-breaking sight, to see fellow-beings, endowed with sense and reason like ourselves, debasing themselves in their last moments below the level of the beasts that perish, and recklessly rushing into the presence of the Almighty in a state of swinish intoxication.

“What is that?” cried Mr Marline. “Heavens, if they have not set fire to the rum in the spirit-room!”

As he spoke, a wavering flash of blue flame gleamed for a moment up the after hatchway, the hatches of which, in the increasing confusion, had been knocked off. Presently this was followed by a thick column of white smoke, speaking as plain as tongue could have told, that the fire had caught. The column became suddenly streaked with flame, which drove the miserable group of women and men forward into the waist. In a minute, the fire burst out of the main hatchway also, and scorched away the two young missionaries and the captain from the pumps, to which, although deserted by the crew, they had, with noble intrepidity and calm resolution, clung until this very moment.

The eldest lady was now lying motionless on the wet deck, as if she had been dead or in a faint, with her bare arms clasped round her child, who, poor little fellow, was tossing his tiny hands, and apparently crying

piteously, while the younger woman was clinging convulsively round her husband's neck, as, along with his companion and the old captain, he now sat on the deck ; the whole grouped round the patriarchal old Moravian, who was kneeling in the middle, seemingly with outstretched hands imploring Heaven for mercy ; while over all, the sea, now lashed into redoubled fury by the increasing gale, broke in showers of spray.

The whole after part of the ship was by this time on fire ; and falling off before the wind under her fore-sail, she ran down in the direction of the frigate that was lying to about a mile to leeward. As she bore up and passed us, the old captain, drenched, half-naked, and bareheaded, with a face pale as death, was endeavouring to seize the ensign union down in the main rigging, but it was torn from his feeble hands by the strength of the wind ; and, as if it had been the last faint gleam of hope finally deserting them, flew down to leeward like a flash of red flame. He then again hung the board on which he had formerly telegraphed over the gangway. The following fearful legend was now written on it :

ON FIRE, AND SINKING !

To have followed her, after having once been pooped, and nearly swamped already, would have been downright madness, especially as we could render no earthly assistance. We had therefore nothing for it but to keep the Midge lying to.

The firmament now became black as night. A thick squall, with heavy rain, that had been some time brewing to windward, burst down on us with the

most terrific fierceness. For a minute we could neither see nor hear any thing but the roaring of the tormented waters, and the howling, or rather thundering of the wind. The shred of sail that we had set flew out of the bolt-rope into ribbons, with a sound like a cannon-shot, and I thought the little vessel would never have righted again. At length it passed us, and cleared where we were, only to show us the poor disabled ship overtaken by it. And now it was evident that she was water-logged, from the heavy sickly way in which she rolled and pitched, while the fire tinged the whole dark sky overhead with a red murky glare, as if it had been midnight.

The squall crept up to her, thickened round her, and gradually concealed both her and the frigate, hiding them entirely from our view within its watery veil ; but the conflagration still lit up, and shone through the grey mist-like shroud (alas, in very truth a shroud to one of them !) giving horrible indications as to her whereabouts.

It suddenly disappeared, and the tornado of wind and rain drifted down to leeward. The clouds rose—the weather cleared away—Great God, what do I see!—The frigate is there—**BUT THE SHIP IS GONE!**

* * * * *

For several minutes, the thunder-storm continued with great violence. At one time I thought the lightning had struck our mast-head ; but it was the breaking up of the weather, for with startling suddenness a bright slanting beam from the evening sun pierced through the dark masses of cloud in the west,

and floated on the tempestuous surface of the troubled waters where the ship had gone down, like a ray of hope breaking through clouds and shadows on the tumultuous agitations of a departing spirit. Was it in very truth the eye of Providence glancing on the watery grave of the innocent and virtuous, and evincing, through our senses, that the quenching of their gentle light amidst the howling waste of waters, although unseen of men, was not unmarked of the Eternal, “ who maketh the clouds his chariot, and who walketh on the wings of the wind ? ” And was the doom of the wicked in the rolling thunder ? The thought stirred me like a trumpet-note.

The sunbeam travelled on, as if drifting before the wind, until it glanced on the dark hull, and lofty spars, and storm staysails of the noble frigate ; and the weather moderating at the same time, we ran off the wind to close the commodore, sailing over the spot where the ship had foundered, as near as we could judge. Several hencoops and spars were floating about ; but the whole crew were gone to “ where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.”

“ Keep her away a bit,” sung out Lennox, in a sharp excited tone, from forward—“ keep her away a bit, Mr Lanyard, there is something struggling in the water close to. More yet—more yet,” as the noble fellow fastened a rope round his waist ; “ that will do—now, messmates, hold on, and mind you haul me in if I miss.” In a twinkling the poor fellow was overboard, striking out gallantly amongst the choking spray.

“ I see the object,” I exclaimed, forgetting all eti-

quette in the excitement of the moment, “that is flashing and struggling in the water; whatever it may be, he has it; down with the helm, and bring her to the wind; down with it, hard-a-lee. He has it—he has it!—No, missed it, by Heaven! No, no, he has fast hold; gently, haul him in, men—gently, that’s it; now, handsomely, in with him. Hurra, well done, Lennox! You are on board again, my lad.”

“Why, what *have* they hauled in with him?” said Donovan, who was standing aft beside me, while Lennox was got on board at the bows. I was myself confoundedly puzzled. “A sheep, and a bundle of clouts, ha, ha, ha!” shouted Joe Peak. I jumped forward. A bundle of clouts—alas, alas! it was the breathless body of the beautiful child I had seen on board the ship.

It was lashed to the neck of the pet lamb with a silk handkerchief, and now lay at my feet a little blue and ghastly corpse. I snatched it up in my arms, more from the impulse of the moment, than any expectation of the ethereal spark being still present in the little cold clammy body; and, to the great surprise of the crew, I called Lennox, and desiring him to get some hot salt in a piece of flannel, and two bottles of hot water, and to bring some warm cloths into the cabin immediately, I descended, stripped the child, and drying his little limbs with a piece of blanket, clapped him into my own berth—Donovan and Lennox followed; and, against all appearances, we set to, and chafed and manipulated the frigid limbs of the darling boy, and applied hot bottles to his feet, and the hot salt to his

little chest and stomach ; but it was all in vain. It was a moving sight to see great rough bushy-whiskered hard-a-weather seamen, in despite of all formality and discipline, struggling like children at a *raree show* to get a peep at what was going on below, through the open skylight that ventilated the little well cabin.

“ Ah, my poor little fellow, you are gone ; your unhappy mother might have spared her dying heart the pang of parting with you, when she made you fast to the lamb—you would then at least have died in her arms, and beside her heart, my sweet child ! ” As I said this, Donovan, Dick Lanyard, who had now joined us, and Lennox, the latter all dripping with sea water, and still pale and breathless with his recent exertions, were standing looking down on the body of the child, having done all they could, but in vain.

The tears were rolling down the Scotch lad’s cheek, and Dennis, honest fellow, once or twice blew his nose very suspiciously, contriving during the trumpetings to steal a small swab at his eyes, lest the share which the old lady in Sackville Street, Dublin, had in him, might become too apparent.

“ He is gone,” said Lennox, after a long pause, as he stepped to the berth, with the intention of covering the dead body with the sheet. He no sooner stooped down, however, than he suddenly started back, and held up his hand to attract our attention. I looked—one eyelid quivered—it opened a little, then shut again, and again the aguish appearance passed over it ; the chest heaved, and the little sufferer drew a long sigh. “ He lives, he lives ! ” said Lennox, in a low voice, and speaking as if he was himself choking. The

word was passed through the skylight to the warm-hearted expectants clustered round it on their knees on the deck above. My eye, what a row ! They instantly jumped to their feet, and began to caper about overhead as if a legion of dancing devils had suddenly possessed them.

“ He’s alive,” shouted one poor fellow, “ and we can now spare Dicky Phantom.”

“ Forward with you, men,” sung out Mr Wadding ; “ forward with you ; how dare you lumber the quarter-deck in that way, with your lubberly carcasses ?”

We now increased our exertions, and had the inexpressible pleasure of seeing them crowned with success ; and having poured some tepid wine and water down the child’s throat—he was as yet too weak to drink it himself, or to speak—we had the happiness to see him open wide his fine dark blue eyes, and take a steady, and apparently, a conscious look at us ; and presently his respiration, though as yet slow and sigh-like, became regular ; the animal heat of his body over his heart began to be perceptible—the blue clayey colour of his skin and face, the sharpness of his features, and the blackness of his shrunk lips, began to fade and give way before the accelerating circulation—and after coughing up a large quantity of salt water, he turned his little face to the ship’s side, and fell into a sound sleep.

By this time it was near sunset, and the gale was rapidly abating, but the sea was still very high. We ran down and closed the commodore, keeping him in view the whole night.

Donovan and I were sitting in the cabin regaling ourselves with a glass of grog, about nine o'clock in the evening—"I say, Benjie, how that poor little fellow snores—do you hear him?"

"I do, and it is music to mine ear, my darling. What a scene it must have been when the ship founder'd! I am glad we did not see it, Donovan."

"And so am I—why, we have rather had a stirring time of it lately, a number of odd circumstances have happened; but what do you make of the commodore's taking on so, as you and Sprawl said he did, when he heard that young De Walden was missing—had he any hand in the young chap, think you?"

"Oh, no," said I laughing, "none; besides he used to keep him tighter set up than any other mid in the ship. However, that would neither make nor mend as to the probability of your surmise, Donovan; but I verily believe he was no connexion of the commodore's."

"Well, well," said Dennis, "give me t'other glass of swizzle, Lennox—thank ye. I say, Lennox, my lad—gallant conduct enough that of yours—after having been so ill too—I wonder you had strength." The man bowed.—"Now since I have had time to consider, what *are* you going to do with the child there, Dick?" said Donovan.

"Send him on board Gazelle, I presume, when the weather moderates—but, good-night, I am off to my cot—who has the watch, Lennox?"

"Mr Peak, sir."

"Tell him to keep close to the commodore, and call me the instant any thing worth reporting occurs."

"Yes, sir."

"How is the weather?"

"Clearing away fast, sir," answered the marine—"and the sea is greatly gone down."

"Very well, let them trim by the commodore, do you hear—keep way with him, but no more; Sir Oliver likes no one to run past him—tell Mr Peak so."

"I will, sir."

"Now, good-night, Brail—good-night, Dennis, dear."

* * * * *

CHAPTER X.

DICKY PHANTOM—YARN SPINNING.

WHEN I awoke next morning, the first thing I did was to reconnoitre how our little and most unexpected visitor held out. There lay the fair child, steeped in a balmy slumber, with his downy cheeks as peachlike and blooming as ever ; even his hair, with the crystallized salt sparkling amongst it, once more curled thick and clustering round his magnificent forehead.

“ Art thou a thing of mortal birth,
 Whose happy home is on our earth ?
 Does human blood with life embue
 Those wandering veins of heavenly blue,
 That stray along thy forehead fair,
 Lost 'mid a gleam of golden hair ?
 Oh, can that light and airy breath
 Steal from a being doomed to death ;
 Those features to the grave be sent,
 In sleep thus mutely eloquent ?
 Or art thou what thy form would seem,
 The phantom of a blessed dream ? ”

As I stooped over him he awoke, and stretched out his arms in the evident expectation of clasping some one that he had been accustomed to lie beside ; alas ! they touched the cold hard ship's side. He grew startled, and called on his mother and then on his

father, on his grandfather, and his dear aunt Emily, waiting between each exclamation for the wonted caress or answer. His eye caught mine—he looked surprised, and peered anxiously all about the cabin, until at last, as if he really had comprehended the full extent of his desolation, he began to cry bitterly, and to sob as if his little heart would have burst. Lennox and I did every thing in our power to pacify him ; but who could come in stead to him of those whose hearts were now cold for ever ? I could not stand it, and went on deck, leaving him in the hands of the steward.

The weather was now clear, and the sea had gone down ; the frigate was about a mile and a half on our lee-bow, carrying all sail, so that we had to crack on to keep up with her. During that forenoon and the following day we had no communication together ; but about 11 A.M. on the third day after the ship had foundered, we got so well placed on her quarter as to be able to communicate without trumpets.

The commodore hailed first—" Sad accident that t'other day, Mr Lanyard."

" Very, sir."

" All hands lost, I presume ? "

Before Dick could answer, he continued, evidently in great amazement, " What child is that, Mr Brail ? " I looked round, and was a good deal surprised to see the figure the little stranger now cut. When picked up he had nothing on but his little frock and shift, which had been torn in the getting of him in ; so Lennox and the sailmaker had rigged him in a tiny check-

frock, with white lappels, a pair of little duck trowsers, with large horn buttons ; very wide at the feet, and very tight at the waist—cut in the very extreme of nautical dandyism ; little white canvass shoes, and a small tarpauling hat. They had even hung by a piece of spunyarn a small horn-handled clasp-knife round his neck, so that he was a complete topman in miniature.

Childlike, for he could not have been three years old at the most, he had already taken to the men, and was playing with the pet lamb, that was making believe to buck him with its head ; and indeed every now and then it would knock over the little fellow, but without hurting him, and roll about with him on the deck.

“ What child is that ? And I see you have some live stock—where got you the sheep ? ”

“ The child was picked up, lashed to the lamb, Sir Oliver, when the ship went down.”

“ Come on board, and dine with me at three, Mr Brail—you can tell me all about it then—come also, Mr Lanyard, and bring the picaniny with you.”

We sheered off again ; and it was laughable to notice the crowd of heads out of the frigate’s ports the instant the little fellow was noticed on our decks. Immediately after this a group of men were sitting in the bows of the felucca with the child amongst them. Lennox came up to me and touched his forehead—“ The little fellow told me his name was William Howard, sir ; probably you would like to set it down as a clew to find out his friends when we get to England.”

"A very proper precaution, Lennox, and well thought of; but are you sure that was the name the child answered to."

"Quite, sir; if you will step here, sir, you will be satisfied of it." I followed him a pace or two nearer the group playing with the child.

"Dogvane," said Lennox—the man answered; "Wilcox," another seaman pricked up his ears, both a good deal surprised at the steward's address, with me at his back—but all this time the boy was tumbling about amongst the men, taking no notice either of Lennox or me.

"William Howard," said Lennox. "What you want?" promptly said the child, as he knocked off from his play, and looked steadfastly at the marine.

"A good and satisfactory proof," said I; "I will make a note of it, Lennox."

Lanyard and I, some time after this, were walking backwards and forwards on the small quarterdeck, talking of I don't remember what, when we perceived a stir amongst the men forward, and an attempt evidently making amongst them to shove old Dogvane aft with some communication to the captain. He appeared reluctant to be thrust forward as spokesman, and waxed very emphatic in his gestures to the group, who were all talking at the same time, and laughing with each other, as they closed round the old quartermaster.

"Come, there is more rain than wind in that squall," said I to Donovan, looking towards the group. "What request, think you, is to be made now, Dennis?"

"Can't conjecture for the life of me," said he.

Dogvane now took a fresh quid, by way of gaining courage, I suppose, to enter on his embassy ; and advancing a step from the rest, he cast his eyes on the deck, and began to thump one hand on another, and to mutter with his lips, as if he had been rehearsing a speech. Presently, giving his trowsers a hitch, and his quid a cruel *chirt*, he looked towards us, in act to advance, as it were, but his heart again failed him ; so with another pull at his waistband, and a tremendous chew of his quid, which made the tobacco juice squirt from both corners of his mouth, he hove about again, apparently in despair and discomfiture, and joined the others, who instantly set up a loud laugh.

Lennox, I saw, had now slid round to the men, and with a most quizzical cast of his eye, was using his powers of persuasion with old Dogvane, to get him to weigh anchor, and set forth on his mission again ; but the quartermaster shook his head, and seemed to refuse point-blank. At length, after a great deal of bother, the steward appeared to have screwed his courage to the sticking place, for he now advanced to within a couple of yards of where we stood—the group behind creeping up after him. He kept rubbing the back of his hand across his muzzle, and coughing and clearing his voice, and every now and then he took a squint over his shoulder, to see, in case his memory should fail him, that he was in immediate communication with his reserve. After another stiff mastication, and a devil of a hitch, he smoothed down his forelock, tore his hat off his head, as if it had been a *divot*, as Lennox might have said, and then broke ground to the following purport—

" You sees, your honour, and Mr Donovan, there—gentlemen both"—A considerable pause, during which he seemed awfully puzzled.

" I am gravelled already, Lennox," quoth he, over his shoulder.

" No, no," said Lennox, " try again, man, try again."

" May it please you, sir—it has blowed half a gale of wind some two days agone, as mayhap your honour knows"—

Lanyard could not help smiling for the soul of him. " Why, Dogvane, I have reason good to know that ; but what *would* you be after ? Come to the point, man."

" And so I would, captain, if I only knowed how to get there—I fear the point he speaks of lies in the wind's eye, and that I shan't fetch it" (aside to Lennox)—" but, as I says before, your honour, we had a sniffler some two days agone, and the parrot, Wapping Poll, your honour, why she was blown overboard, your honour ; and as a parrot is not of the gull specie your honour, I fears as how poor Poll may have been drowned."

I could scarcely keep my gravity.

" Why, assume that the bird is drowned then, Dogvane, and get on."

" No, sir, with all submission, I have no sartainty of that. A bird that can speak, must think ; and it's no unpossibility, in my mind, in Poll being at this moment cruising as mate of the watch on the back of a wild-duck—but then a duck does dive now and then, to be sure."—I now suspected he had strengthened his nerves a little with a glass of grog.—" However, Poll

might take a flight to air her pinions lest they should mildew, during the time the other was below, you know, sir—if she only knewed *where* he might rise again. Still a gull would be her chance as for that—no diving in a gull, your honour.”

“ But my good man”—the lieutenant, I saw, was not over well pleased to perceive that the old fellow was a sheet or so in the wind, and still less with the freedom of the jest, if jest it was meant for—“ will you, I again ask you, come to the point, Dogvane—what *would* you be at? I can’t stand all day palavering here, unless you know your own mind,” and he turned away.

His rebuke seemed to rouse Dogvane, who now making a sudden effort, sung out quick and sharp—“ Then the parrot’s overboard and drowned, sir.—And the monkey is drowned too, sir, and the old cat is dead below with the damp and cold; and we shall all be starved for want of a pet, sir.” Here he slewed his head backwards. “ D—n your eyes, Jack Lennox, will *that* serve your turn, now?”

“ Oh, I see, I see,” said Lanyard.

“ There,” said Dogvane, giving a skip, and turning a joyful countenance over his shoulder to the group behind him—“ There, his honour *sees*—did not I tell you so?—why, I thank your honour—we all thanks you kindly, sir; and such care as we shall take of him—oh, my eye! But all I says is, thank your honour again in the name of the whole bunch of us.” He made his salaam, and he and his tail turned to bundle forward.

“ I guess I know *now what* you would be at, Dog-

vane," said the lieutenant. On this the old quartermaster came to the wind again, his face evincing great chagrin and vexation at the idea generated by Lan-yard's manner, that after all his lucid explanation, his captain might still be unenlightened. "I presume that having lost all your pets"—

"Ah yes, sir,—that's it."

"That having lost all your pets, you want to ask me for the sheep that you have picked up."

"No, no, no,"—ran amongst the men; and old Dogvane slid out with a jet of tobacco juice—"D—n the sheep entirely—beg your honour's pardon—but, Jack Lennox, there, take my oar now, will ye—I can make nothing of it—I can't pull a-head at all—it has been all back water with me;" and so saying he made his obeisance, and slunk away amongst the people, slewing his head from side to side, and smiting his thigh, as if he were saying—"Poo, poo, you see the captain *won't* understand, do as you will—indeed, he does not *want* to understand, you see."

The marine, on the retreat of the quartermaster, now came forward as a reserve, and in good set terms, leaving his northern accent out of the account, preferred a request on behalf of his shipmates, not for the sheep, but in the destruction of all the other pet creatures during the gale, he made out a strong case, which could only be met by your giving up the *child*; which, as a sweetener, I presume, he promised should succeed the defunct monkey, Dicky Phantom, in all his honours and perquisites; and "although we all know his name to be Will Howard," said he, in conclusion, "we request your permission, sir, to christen him

afresh, and to give him the name Dicky sailed under, as an earnest of future kindness to himself, and a tribute of respect to the poor brute, who has hitherto afforded us so much amusement."

I was a good deal tickled at all this.

"But, men, you all heard Sir Oliver desire the child to be sent on board the frigate," said Lanyard.

Here several voices grumbled—"Why they have two monkeys on board, and a kangaroo, and a hog in armour; and—oh, surely, they won't grab *him* too!"

"Why, sir, we must leave it to you," said Lennox; "if the commodore is in earnest in taking Dicky Phantom from us—surely he will spare us one of the monkeys. But I am sure no one will take such care of him in the frigate, as I should here, sir."

"Very well," said Dick, good-naturedly, "I will see what can be done; in the mean time, get the child ready to accompany me in the boat when I go on board to dinner. But where are his clothes?—you can't send him in that rig?"

The marine laughed. "Why, sir, his own clothes are all torn in pieces, and he has no others made; indeed, our sail-maker says he could no more make a petticoat than a gown for the Pope, sir."

There was no help for it; and at half-past two, Donovan, Lanyard, and I found ourselves in the stern sheets of the small boat, with Dicky Phantom sitting beside us, dressed out like a Lilliputian boarder. As we pulled on board, I had time to look more minutely at the equipment of the boy. As already mentioned, he was dressed in trowsers, check shirt, and little tarpauling hat, with the word Midge painted

in large letters on a scroll on the front of it ; but they had now added a little cutlass, ground down from a piece of iron hoop, and bound round his waist by a black belt ; and as a tiptop finish to his equipment, they had fastened an oakum queue to his curly wig, that hung down over the waistband of his little breeches. Dick's natural bashfulness was sorely tested when we got alongside, and found the ship swarming in all directions with busy grinning faces, wherever they could get a squint at us and our little passenger ; and when I stepped on deck, I had not the courage to take the child up, but left him in the boat.

“ How are you, Mr Brail ?—glad to see you, Mr Lanyard—Mr Donovan, I hope you are better,” said Sir Oliver. We made our acknowledgments. “ Where is your little passenger, Mr Lanyard. Have you brought him on board ? ”

“ Why, yes, Sir Oliver, he is in the boat alongside, but the people have so monkeyfied him, that he is scarcely presentable on the quarterdeck.”

“ Never mind, hand him up—hand him up—let us see him.” And poor little Dicky Phantom was straightway transferred from the stern-sheets of the boat to the frigate’s deck, amidst a buzz of laughter from officers and men.

The poor child was frightened, and ran crying to me, when Sir Oliver, with his innate right feeling and kindness of heart, asked me to bring him down into the cabin, which I did, where the little fellow soon became quite at home, and began to amuse himself with some books of plates, and little Chinese figures

that the commodore took out of a locker for his entertainment.

I related the particulars of my interview with his parents and kinsfolk on board the ship, which moved the kind old man exceedingly ; but dinner was now announced, and Dicky was handed over to Lennox, who had come on board in the novel capacity of dry-nurse. I could see the whole crew clustered on the main-deck, in expectation of his coming out of the cabin ; and the moment he made his appearance,—“ Lennox, pass him forward.”—“ I say, Jack, Jack Lennox, lend him to me, man.”—“ Oh ! d—n my eyes, man, do give us a spell of the piccaniny.”—“ No, no —hand him to me first—here to me, man—I bespeak him, Jack, before Bill, there,” resounded on all hands ; and the two monkeys and hog in armour were as dust in the balance compared with Dicky Phantom. We sat down to dinner. Mr Lanyard, and old Sprawl, along with one of the mates, were present, and every thing went on very much as usual.

“ We must endeavour,” said Sir Oliver, “ to find out that poor little fellow’s family and relations when we get to England ; but what are we to do with him until we get there ?”

I cheerfully offered to take care of him on board the Midge.

“ You are very good, Mr Brail—but in so small a hooker it would be inconvenient, so I shall make shift the best way I can here.”

Lanyard laughed, and said, “ That next to a round-robin had been signed by the Midges, petitioning you

would let them have the boy for the cruise, sir, in consequence of their having lost the ship's monkey and parrot." I noticed Sir Oliver's servant prick up his ears at this; and that same evening, before we got away from Gazelle, a deputation waited on Sprawl to offer both monkeys and the kangaroo, and the hog in armour, to the Midges, in fee simple, in exchange for Dicky Phantom. The commodore had recovered his looks and spirits greatly since I last saw him, and in the course of the evening gave us some of his old stories, more than one of which I had certainly heard before. They were chiefly relating to the countries on the borders of the Mediterranean, and the following tickled me a good deal at the time:—

Sir Oliver had been one of old Sir J. D——'s lieutenants on that station, and it was his watch on deck on a certain forenoon—"a fine fresh breezy day, clear and sunshiny, and the old T—— was cracking along on the starboard tack, with the island of Malta broad on the lee bow, ten miles distant, or thereabouts. She was going nine knots, as near as could be, and the admiral was walking backwards and forwards with me on the weather-side of the quarterdeck. It happened that the captain's servant was an inveterate stutterer, although a steady good man, and we had not continued our perambulations above a quarter of an hour, when this functionary rushed up the ladder in a deuced quandary, and thus addressed, or rather attempted to address the admiral:—

" 'Sir—sir—sir—Jo—Jo—Jo'—"

“ ‘ What does he mean ? ’ said the admiral, startled by the energy of the man’s gestures.

“ ‘ Your pi—pi—pig. Your wi—wi—wig, over—over—over ’ —

“ Here the poor fellow got into convulsions, and walloped his arms about like the sails of a wind-mill, making signs that some *body* or *thing* was overboard. The captain coming on deck at the moment, saw what was going on—‘ Sing, you lubber, sing,’ and straight-way he of the impediment gave tongue in a clear and melodious pipe, as follows :—

“ ‘ The admiral’s pig is overboard, is overboard, is overboard,
His pig and his wig are overboard,
Heave-to, or they’ll both be drown’d.’

“ ‘ Man the fore-clew garnets,’ sung out old Blow-hard—‘ back the main-topsail, Captain R——, back the main-topsail—lower away the jolly-boat. Quick, Captain R——, quick.’

“ Here the old flag-officer’s own servant came up to him, as he was straining his neck where he stood on the aftermost carronade, to see, over the hammock-cloths, what was becoming of the pig and the unfortunate scratch.

“ ‘ There, there they are—both are astern,’ he sung out. ‘ There’s my poor wig bobbing at me.’ (The origin of bob wig ?) ‘ It will choke some dolphin, or I am a Dutchman, before evening. And the pig, oh, my poor pig !’

“ ‘ Please you, Sir J——,’ chimed in the functionary, ‘ it is a false alarm. That stuttering blockhead has made a mistake ; it is the master’s wig, Sir J——, and the porker belongs to the ward-room.’

“ ‘ Fill the maintopsail again,’ rapped out the knight. ‘ Poor pig—poor pig—can’t be helped—can’t be helped—pity the master should lose his scratch though, *but it can’t* be helped, Captain R——, can’t be helped. So fill away the maintopsail again, Captain R——.’

“ *Alas and alackaday, both the pig and the wig were drowned!*”

Mr Donovan being now well enough to resume his duty, remained that evening in the frigate, but Lan-yard and I returned, towards nightfall, with my tiny topman, to the felucca, and great was the buzz of joy amongst the Midges at getting back Dicky Phantom.

We were sitting at breakfast on deck under the awning, next morning, Donovan having returned for his traps, and the frigate’s boat was towing astern—Dicky Phantom was part and portion of our society—the carpenter having already got a little chair so contrived, that when lashed to the leg of the table, he could not fall out of it.

The frigate was about a mile to the northward of us, looming like a seventy-four, as she glimmered through the hot blue haze that hung over the horizon, and circumscribed our view on all sides, for it was stark calm. The sun shone down with true tropical intensity ; the heaving swell was like a sea of molten silver, and every now and then a dolphin would leap close to us, while, as from the side of a watery hill, a shower of flying-fish would spring out and shoot across a liquid valley, until they dropped like a discharge of grape into the next billow.

Nothing nourishes one's grog-drinking propensities, or spoils one's beauty so much, as the reflection of the sun from the glass-like surface of the calm sea within the tropics. His direct rays are in some measure warded off by your hat-brim ; but were you even to turn up your ugly phiz at him, and stare him in the face, they would have comparatively no effect, to the fierceness of their heat second-hand in this way. Oh, the sickening effect of the afternoon's glare, thus reflected, and flashed up into your face, under the snout of your chapeau, which here, like a battery taken in reverse, proves no defence, until your eyes are blinded, and your cheeks rouged and roasted, and your *neb* peeled, like an ill-scraped radish, leaving the under-skin so tender, that breaking on the wheel is comfort to blowing your nose. Cold cream—cold cream ! Oh, for a pot of it, ye gods !

I have before said, we were not, where we sat, much above four feet out of the water, and several flying-fish had come on board that morning ; so just as I was helping Dicky to a little water, to wash down the soaked biscuit that, through Lennox's kindness, he had been feeding on, dash—a very large one flew right againt Dennis Donovan's cheek, and dropped walloping and floundering into his plate.

“ Blazes, what is that ?”

“ Oh, what a beautiful leetle fis !” said the child.

But Dennis, honest man, did not recover his equanimity during the whole meal.

Immediately after breakfast, as he was preparing to go on board of the Gazelle, and to part company regu-

larly, one of the men, who was looking out astern, sung out in a low tone, as if afraid the fish should hear, "A shark, sir, close under the stern." We gently hauled the frigate's boat alongside, to be out of the way, and, on looking over the tafferel, there was the monster, sure enough, about three feet below the surface of the clear green water, eyeing us with the greatest composure.

As if noways daunted, but rather determined to have a nearer and better view of us, he gradually floated up, until his dorsal fin was a foot out of the water, and his head but just covered by it. We instantly got a hook baited, and let down. The fish was about twelve feet long; and, as I leant over the low stern of the vessel, when she sank on the fall of the swell, I could have touched the monster's head with a handspike. There was something very exciting in being on terms of such intimacy with a creature who would have thought it capital sport to have nipped you in two.

He eyed the bait and the hook, and then drew back about a yard from it, and ogled me again, as much as to say,—“Not to be had so clumsily, Master Brail; but if you would oblige me with one of your legs, now, or even an arm, I would vastly prefer it to the piece of rancid salt pork you offer me on that rusty piece of crooked iron there.”

Here again he reconnoitred the bait, and walloped about all round it, as if laughing at us, and saying to himself,—“No go, my boys.” He then looked up with a languishing eye at little Dicky Phantom, whom

Lennox was now holding on the tafferel. "Ah," again said sharkee to himself, I make no question, "ah, *that's* the thing I want. What a morsel *that* would be!" and he made several rushes hither and thither, as one has seen a dog do, before settling down steadily on end, to look up at the morsel an urchin is tantalizing him with.

At length, seeing I was so unaccommodating and inexorable as not even to oblige him with a limb, and that Dicky Phantom was altogether forbidden fruit, he made an angry dart, and vanished below the counter.

"Poo, confound him, he can't be hungry," quoth Mr Weevil the purser, as he hauled in the line, hand over hand, until the bait was close under foot; when, just as it was rising out of the water, the shark, finding that it must be either salt junk or no fare, made a sudden grab at the bait, gorged it—dashed off with *it*, and, alack-a-daisy, *with the purser also*. Dreaming no harm, he had for a moment taken a turn of the line round his left arm as he hauled in, which, by the sudden jerk, *ran*; and if Lennox and old Drainings had not caught him by the heels, he would have been fairly overboard. The fun now grew fast and furious, for there was the hideous fish, walloping and floundering, and surging about, within a fathom of the purser, who was hanging over the stern, like a side of beef laid in, at sailing, for sea stock; his head dip-dipping into the water every now and then, as the vessel rose and fell, while he struggled, and spluttered, and twisted, in a vain attempt to get his arm loose; the shark all the

time back, backing like a restive horse, and dragging and jerking about until I thought the purser's fin would absolutely have been torn from his shoulder.

All this time the crew were like to explode with laughter, while poor Weevil roared lustily,—“ Haul me in, for Heaven's sake, my good men, or he will swallow me—haul”—Here his head would sink into the water, and the sentence end in a great coughing and spluttering, until, just as he was on the point of being suffocated, out his nob would be dragged again by the pitching of the vessel, so as to enable him to renew his shouts for succour. At length the shark, being a good deal exhausted, was brought close under the stern, when I sent two bullets, from my double-barrelled Manton, through his head, right between his eyes.

“ Ah,” quoth old Drainings the cook, “ that has settled him, or the devil is in it; so lend a hand, Lennox,”—(the marine had hold of one of the purser's legs, and the *artiste!* the other)—“ so lend a hand, Lennox, and, during the lull, let us bouse in Mr Weevil. Ho, yo, yo, yo, oh !”

The wounded shark had borne the loss of his brains with great composure, but the instant he felt the renewed drag at the pork in his maw, as if he had been only stunned, he started off at a tangent as strong as ever; and before you could say Jack Robinson, the pursuer's starboard leg was whipped out of Jack Lennox's clutches; but the one to port being in old Drainings' iron claws, was held like grim death, for he was a great ally of Weevil's.

“Don’t for Heaven’s sake, let me go, Mr Drainings,” roared Weevil, as if cookey had been his last shroud, “don’t”—splutter, splutter—“oh”—cough, cough. The little vessel at this moment sended heavily, giving a strange sort of swinging lurch or wallop, as if shaking her sides with laughter, and again dipped his head a foot under water.

As the unfortunate piscator rose this time with a jerk to the surface, the shark, having had momentary scope to sink, kept his own so resolutely, that *clip*, as a climax to the fun, the old cook himself was torn from his hold, and away *he* went next, still clinging to the purser’s leg, however, so that if his own had not been seized by Lennox and myself, he would have been overboard also. I was now like to die with laughter. I could scarcely keep my hold ; as for speaking, it was out of the question, for the shark, and purser, and cook, like a string of Brobdingnag sausages, were floundering in the calm water, close under our counter, all linked together, not quite “ladies’ chain,” by the way, although, from the half-suffocated exclamations of two of the links, it might not inaptly have been called, “Chaine des *Dames*.” Oh, fie ! Benjie Brail. However, the matter was now getting serious.

“Mr Peak, that boathook there—quick, bring the boathook.”—Little Joe was no admirer of Weevil’s, and, as he made believe to hook him by the waistband of the breeches, as he struggled in the water, he contrived to dig the sharp point of the instrument into his stern-frame more than once ; and at length when he did catch him, it was by nothing that would hold,

but by one of the pockets of his coat, which instantly *gave*, and out flew into the water his snuff-box, pocket-handkerchief, and a nondescript pouch of seal-skin, rolled up.

“Lord save us! dinna drown the spleuchan,” exclaimed Lennox, as it dropped into the sea.

“Hook him again,” shouted Lanyard.

“Oh, Lord! captain, haul me in, haul me in, or I must let go Mr Weevil’s leg,” sung out cookey.

“Don’t, for Heaven’s sake, do that thing, my dear Mr Drainings,” roared the purser. Here Joey caught him again with the boathook, by the cape of his coat; and, with the assistance of two men, he had got him a foot or two out of the water, when *screed*,—the cloth, which was of no kindred to that which composed Baillie Jarvie’s skirts,—gave way, and down he plumped again *souse*, and the splashing and struggling, and cursing and coughing, and blowing of fish and men, were renewed with twofold extravagance, until by a fortunate dig the iron hook was finally passed through the head-band of his nether garment, and the canvass fortunately holding, we hauled him in, with Drainings still sticking to him like grim Death, or a big sucker-fish. It was a pity that such a delightful party should be separated, so by slipping down a bowling knot over the shark’s head, and under his gills, we hoisted him also in on deck, which he soon had all to himself entirely; I really expected he would have stove it in with the lashing of his tail. We hammered him on the head until we had crushed it to mummy; but, like many other strange fish, he appeared to get on as well

without brains as with. In fine, he would have taken the ship from us out and out, had not old Shavings watched his opportunity, and nicked him on the tail with his hatchet, thereby severing his spine, when a complete paralysis instantly took place, and he lay still ; but even an hour after he was disembowelled, he writhed about the deck like an eel.

Speaking of sharks, I must *taigle* you here with another story, which, however *lee-like*, did actually occur, as the records of the Jamaica Admiralty Court fully prove. But let Dennis Donovan tell it in his own words.

“ We were cruising off Cape Tiburoon, to take our chance of any of the French outward-bound that might have preferred to make the passage to Port-au-Prince by the southward of St Domingo. It might have been five in the afternoon,—I was a little middy then, and had dined with the captain that day ; a fine fresh forenoon we had had of it,—but the devil a thing was there in sight, not even a small white speck of a sail slipping along shore apparently sailing in the white surf, and standing off full and boldly, as the painters say, from the dark background of bushes fringing the white beach.”

“ But why take the pains to describe *so well* what *was not there*, Dennis ?”

“ Never you mind, but let me get along ; you can pocket the description, Benjie, and keep it for your own use.

“ I had just swallowed what I had sense enough to know was considered as my last glass of wine, and had

come on deck, when, looking out to leeward, where the setting sun was casting a blinding wake on the blue waters that blazed up in our faces, roasting our skin into the colour of scarlet, I thought I saw a dark object on the very verge of the horizon. From the afternoon having come on thick, this had not been noticed before ; but just as I had made the discovery, the look-out man at the masthead hailed, ‘a strange sail, abeam of us to leeward.’

“ ‘ Thank you for nothing,’ responded the crusty lieutenant ; ‘ you blind beetle you, is it *now* you see it ? Why, we can see under her topsails from the deck here.’

“ ‘ May be, sir,’ answered the man, ‘ but the weather has been thick as buttermilk down to leeward until this moment.’

“ ‘ All hands make sail,’ instantly followed, and in five minutes we ran off the wind, with every rag set that we could spread. A stern chase is proverbially a long chase, and although our friend a-head set nothing as we neared him that he had not abroad before, the next morning broke, and we were still three miles astern of him : Jamaica being in sight to leeward. As the sun rose, the breeze freshened, and before noon we had to hand the royals, and stand by the studding-sail halyards. The fiery sea-breeze that struck us, presently quelled the courage of the chase, for he had to take in his kites also, with the loss of his foretopmast-studding-sail ; and as we carried the breeze down with us, we were presently alongside, and I was sent on board in the boat.

“ I touched my hat to the master, ‘ What brig, if you please?’

“ ‘ The Stormy Peterel, of, and from St John’s, New Brunswick.’

“ ‘ Whither bound?’

“ ‘ To Kingston, Jamaica, with a cargo of flour and *notions*, consigned to Macaa, Walker, and Co.’

“ All very pat, thought I—no hesitation here. ‘ I will look at your papers, if you please,’ and I unceremoniously stepped down the companion ladder, and entered the cabin. The master of the brig followed me, entering with a good deal of swagger in his bearing, and slammed himself down on the locker with his hat on. I was a little nettled at this, and again took a steady look at my gentleman; but to make evident the cause why my suspicions were excited, be it known, that at the time I write of, the old navigation laws were in full operation; and no American, or other foreign vessel, was allowed to trade with our colonies; every thing imported having to be carried in British bottoms; so that numberless tricks were frequently put in practice by neutrals when the colonial markets were favourable, to cloak the real character of their vessels,—amongst others, that of simulating English papers was very frequent. To return, I looked at our friend again. He was tall, sallow, and Yankee-looking in hull, spars, and rig, and his accent smelt of peach brandy—strong of the Chesapeake. He was dressed in faded nankeen trowsers, rusty black coat and waiscoat, all very threadbare, the coat sleeves scarcely reaching below the elbows. He wore a broad-brimmed

white hat, with a rumpled and spray-washed black or rather brown crape twisted round it, but no neckcloth, his shirt collar, which was cut very high, being open in front, disclosing his long scraggy red neck, with a lump in his throat as if he had swallowed a grape shot, that had stuck half way down. His large ill-washed frill was also open, showing his sunburnt chest, covered with a fell of shaggy red hair, as thick as a fox-cover, and his face was burned red by exposure to the sun, the skin peeling off in small pieces like the film of an egg, here and there. His features were very strongly marked and coarse, one side of his mouth drooping more than the other, from which he kept swabbing the stream of tobacco juice with the back of his hand. He had little fierce grey eyes, the white being much bloodshot, and his nose was long and sharp, as near as might be of the shape and colour of a crab's claw, with a blue peeled point. But the most curious part of the animal was the upperworks—the forehead being very broad immediately above his eyes, which were shaded by enormous shaggy sandy-white eyebrows, like pig's bristles, it then tapered away into a cone at the crown of his head, like the hat in vogue amongst the Roundheads in old Noll's time. His red whiskers grew in two tufts low down on his jowls and all under his chin, and he kept spitting most abominably, and twitching the right cheek, and quivering the right eyelid, while he looked at you, in a nervous, and to me exceedingly disagreeable manner. He had, in fine, nothing of the sailor whatever in his appearance—being more like a half-pay Methodist parson.

“ ‘ There be my papers, sir,’ said this enticing person, tossing down a parcel of by no means dirty manuscripts. The register especially, as well as the manifest, seemed surprisingly clean, and the former, instead of being carefully enclosed in a tin box, as customary in merchant vessels, was wrapped up in brown paper. I opened the manifest, and glanced at a bundle of copies of bills of lading, called ship’s blanks. The cargo answered his description, and the bills of lading seemed to correspond with the manifest. I then lifted the register, and by it perceived that the vessel purported to be two years old, yet the document, in place of being torn and chafed at the foldings, and dirty, greasy, and defaced, was quite sound.—When I opened it, after unfolding the brown paper in which it was wrapped, and threw it on the table, it absolutely and truly opened of itself, and lay flat on the table, as if unused to the ripples and creases—to the no small surprise of Jonathan himself I could perceive—thus seeming to say, ‘ Take a look at me, Master Donovan, I am worth the perusal, perhaps.’ —‘ Ha, ha,’ thought I, ‘ my fine fellow, the creases in that register are very fresh, I guess—it has not been quite two years folded, or I never saw the Liffey;’ but I said never a word aloud, to the apparent great comfort of the skipper, who, I could see, sat on thorns, while I was overhauling the papers—for, thinks I, if he sees into me, he will haul his wind, and not come to an entry at Kingston at all, and on the high seas I cannot touch him; but then, again, as the devil would have it, were we even to decoy him into port, another

man-of-war may nab him before us. My game, said I to myself, is to lull his suspicions as well as I can ; and having done so, I returned to the frigate, and we ran down to Port Royal very lovingly together.

“ They had caught a shark during my absence, and found a tin case, loaded with a dozen musket balls, with a ship’s manifest and register in it, in his maw. I lost no time in repairing to the cabin, and communicating to the captain my suspicions that the brig was an American, sailing under false papers ; recommending that the frigate should stick close and seize him whenever he had passed the Rubicon by reporting at the fort at Port Royal. He agreed to all my suggestions ; and after determining that I was to board and seize the vessel before others could have an opportunity of doing so, ordered in dinner, and laughing, threw the bright white iron case to me that had been cut out of the maw of the shark.

“ I opened it, and, to my surprise, found that, according to the best of my recollection, the manuscript copy of the manifest answered word for word, nail for nail, with the one I had seen—the measurement of the Yankee brig Alconda being identically the same, out and out, with that of the ‘ Stormy Peterel of St John’s, New Brunswick.’

“ Having communicated the coincidence to the captain, he desired me to keep my own counsel, which I did. The vessel was seized and libelled in the Vice-Admiralty Court, to the great apparent surprise of Captain Shad of the Stormy Peterel, I guess. The day of trial arrived ; we were all in court, and so were the

crew and captain of the detained vessel. Our counsel, learned in the law, made his speech, and produced his witnesses. He of the adverse faction replied, and produced his, and cross-questioned ours, and pretty considerable perjuries were flying about ; and although the suspicion was strong against the *Stormy Peterel*, still she was on the point of flying away and weathering us all, when the lawyer retained by the merchantman said sneeringly across the table to our advocate, ‘ Sorry must go for damages against your client ; I hope you have your recognisances and bail-bond ready.’

“ ‘ You are very obliging, brother Grab,’ said our friend, calmly—then to the bench, ‘ may it please your honour, I am now in a position to save you farther trouble, by proving, on the most undenialble evidence, by a most disinterested witness, that the vessel in court, purporting to be “ the *Stormy Peterel* of St John’s, New Brunswick”’—here Jonathan’s jaw fell—‘ is neither more nor less’—the Yankee’s eyes seemed like to start from their sockets—‘ than the American brig *Alconda*, off and from New York.’

“ ‘ Who the hell has peached ?’ screamed the Yankee, looking round fiercely among his own men, and utterly shoved off his balance !

“ ‘ Silence,’ sang out the crier.

“ ‘ The hand of heaven is in this iniquitous matter, please your honour.’ Here he produced the tin box, and took out the *Alconda*’s manifest and register, and confronting them with the forged papers belonging to the *Stormy Peterel*, the trick was instantly proved, and the vessel condemned—Jonathan, as he swung out of court,

exclaiming, amidst showers of tobacco juice, ‘ Pretty considerably damned and con-damned, and all by a bloody sharkfish. If this ben’t, by G—, the most active and unnatural piece of cruelty—may I be phy-sicked all my natural days with hot oil and fish-hooks ! ’ ”

So far, so true ; but Dennis, honest man, super-added a few flourishes of his own, one of which was, that the spine of the shark was extracted, and preserved in the captain’s cabin, hung up to the roof ; and that one of the quartermasters, “ a most religious charackter,” could notice certain vibrations and twistings of the vertebræ, whenever any vessel with false papers was in the vicinity—even when she could not be seen from the masthead.

“ Why, it must have been a divining rod—a second rod of Moses,” said I, laughing.

“ And you have said it with your own beautiful mug, Benjie Brail,” quoth Dennis Donovan.

“ Gammon,” said I Benjie.

CHAPTER XI.

JAMBÉ DE BOIS.

“ Now, Master Abraham, if you try that trick again, I will make free with this mopstick, and break your head. Why, look here, cook, if he has not been teaching the child to chew tobacco! I suppose they will be asking Mr Weevil to serve him out his allowance of grog next,”

It was Lennox who had spoken. Lanyard rung the bell. “ What’s the matter now, steward?”

“ Oh, sir, they are massacring that poor little fellow, and teaching him all manner of abominations. But it’s all in kindness, sir; so one really cannot be so angry with them, as”—

“ Never mind then, get breakfast. What sort of morning is it?”

“ Quite calm, sir.”

“ And the frigate?”

“ About a mile to the northward of us, sir. The boat that was sent on board with Mr Donovan this morning, and to bring hay for the sheep, is now coming back again, sir.”

Presently I heard the splash of the oars, then the noise and rumble of their being laid in; and the crew

having got on board, she was hoisted up. By this time I was on deck ; it was about seven o'clock in the morning, and, as the steward had reported, quite calm. "Heigh, ho ! another roasting day, Mr Marline," said I, as I swept the horizon with the glass, round every part of which the junction of sea and sky was obliterated by a hot quivering blue haze, through which the frigate twinkled, her white streak glimmering like a ribbon streaming in the wind, and her hull trembling, as it were, in every atom : while her masts appeared to twist like snakes, the small wavy motion beginning at the deck, and flowing upwards towards the mast-heads.

"Yes, sir," said the midshipman, "every appearance of a broiling day, indeed."

"Well, get the awning up, as quick as you can," said the lieutenant, who had followed me. And I set myself to play with Dicky Phantom, until breakfast was ready.

We ate our meal on deck ; after it was ended I went below, and took a book to while away the time in the least wearisome manner possible ; but being a dull dog I had got hold of, I soon tired ; and, as I stretched myself on the locker, I saw Lennox, in his small pantry of a place behind the companion ladder, busy writing. When I first noticed him, he seemed very serious and melancholy. I could see a tear stand in his eye now and then, and he would blow his nose in a very pathetic and interesting manner ; but as he went on, he once or twice laid down his pen, and laughed to himself, rubbing his hands in ecstasy. He

again plied his task for some time quietly, until the laughing fit once more overtook him, when he threw himself back on the small *settle* or block on which he sat, with such vehemence, that he cracked the back of his skull against the ladder very sharply, and uttered an involuntary “ Oh !” In the confusion which this lapse threw him into, he upset the ink on his paper. Out of pure wickedness, I called out, “ Lennox !”

“ Coming, sir,”—while he hustled to gather up the ink, a precious article on board, with his pen, and to shovel it into the bottle again ; but he did not come great speed this way, so he next tried a tea-spoon.

“ Lennox !”

“ Coming, sir.”

“ Coming ? why, do come, man, and give me a glass of water, will you ?”

“ This instant, sir—beg pardon, sir—but—but”—

By this he had got his papers stowed away, and made his appearance with his trowsers covered with ink. I looked at him ; he was blushing to the eyes.

“ Why, what *have* you been after ? You have spilled all my ink, I see—writing love-letters, I suppose ?”—In his bashfulness he here drew his hand across his face, and thereby transferred a good dash of the “ best Japan ” to his nose and cheeks, the effect of which was so absurd that I could not help laughing outright.—“ You are an author, perhaps ?”

He blushed still deeper, and seeing I waited for an answer, rapped out, “ I am, sir, in a small way.”

“ The deuce !” said I, rather surprised that I should have hit the right nail on the head thus unexpectedly ;

"and pray, what works have you produced—what walk in literature have you especially followed out?"

"The novel line, lately, sir, but"—

"The novel line! A *novel* line, certainly, for a corporal of marines," said I, interrupting him rather sneeringly.—"Pray, who and what were you before you joined Gazelle, Lennox; that is, if you have no objections to tell?"

He did not make me a direct answer.

"You have been very kind to me, sir," said the poor fellow, "and have more than once stood my friend, when, Heaven knows, I was desolate enough; indeed, if it had not been for you, Mr Brail, I would have gone overboard, some dark night, with a cold shot at my feet; for the Devil, who is always busy with desperate men, has been near getting the upper hand astener than I will stay the noo to tell. But as I was saying,"—and here a large tear rolled down his face, through ink and all,—"I am bound to you, sir, and if you have any desire to know who I am, or what I have been, I am ready to tell you."

I was a little moved at this, as I had no idea that any little service I had rendered the poor fellow should have been so gratefully remembered. "Why, Lennox, I have done no more to you, nor for you, than I hope every right-hearted man would have done to an inferior; but I will not deny that I have such a desire."

He put into my hands a dirty roll of paper.

"Your honour has been very patient with me; but I hope I know my place better than to weary you with a long story; so, referring you to the manuscript,

which you may read or not as you please, I will, with your permission—go and kill the pig, and then help the cook to scrape potatoes in the galley.”

He withdrew—I looked after him, and then took a short turn on deck, where every thing was going on much as usual ; I then returned to the cabin, and having stretched myself along the locker, and seen the windsail comfortably drawing down the small skylight, I unrolled the manuscript, which was entitled

“ THE SORROWS OF SAUNDERS SKELP.”

Poor Dominie Skelp ! his sorrows were amusing enough, here and there, melancholy as his story was in the main. Some parts of the narrative were powerful, although unequally written, as if the mind of the writer had originally been calm and clear as a polished mirror, until shattered by the rude blows of misfortune into dust and rubbish, but still intermingled here and there with bright and sparkling fragments. His father, a respectable tradesman in a small country town, had cramped himself in every way to give his son a good education, and he had actually attained the barren dignity of a licentiate in the Scottish Kirk. After this he became the schoolmaster of the parish, and was even in the habit of occasionally preaching for Mr Bland, the clergyman, or minister thereof, as he called him. At length he fell in love with a beautiful and innocent girl ; after which it was all the old story,—

“ The course of true love never did run smooth.”

And the loves of Saunders Skelp and Jessy Miller were no exception to the rule ; the young laird, Mr Adderfang, having seduced the girl, and contrived, by a very

mean and cruel *ruse*, not only to blast the happiness of both, but even to cast the blame of the transaction on the young probationer for a season. “ But let the dominie tell his own story, Master Benjie.”

“ With all my heart, my boy. So here it is ; mind it don’t try your patience, however.”

“ EPISODE OF THE STICK LEG.

“ And Adam fell by Eve : from womankind
All evil was derived ; had the male race
But grown like turnips, man had never sinned.

Dominie Skelp’s Illustrations of Byron, MS.

“ My great-grandfather, grandfather, and immediate progenitor, were all *ministers’ men* in the landward parish of Lincumdodie.

“ My father had added to his more immediate vocation, that of a shoemaker ; and being a good tradesman, we were the easiest in our circumstances of any family in the village, until my stepmother suddenly took to drinking, and thereby nearly broke my father down in mind, body, and estate.

“ I can call it nothing else but a disease ; for hitherto she had always been a discreet body, and a kind to me, considering I was an only bairn, and therefore sure to be fashious, and nane of her ain flesh and blood forby.

“ My father focht lang with her, strapping her respectably at ae time, and fleeching and praying with her at anither ; syne he would get the minister himsell to speak till her, but a’ wad not do, for the puir body just grat and listened, and gat fou again ; and grat and listened and gat fou, until at length the auld man crossed his arms in downricht despair, *and let her at it*

“ The issue wasna long in doubt, for she was fairly *speerited* awa between and that day three months.

“ Young as I was, my surprise was great, and so was that of the haill village, at the way my father took on when she died. ‘ She was ill to hersell, and no that guid till you, Saunders,’ said the minister to him one day, by way of comforting him. ‘ And I can scrimp deny that same, minister, but for mony a day she was a leal and gude wife to me, before she fell away intil that evil propensity ; and although it whiles surprises me mysell that I should miss an auld drucken wife sae muckle, yet lang custom, minister, makes ane even miss the very middenstead before the door, ye ken ; at ony rate, I canna think o’ her just yet, without a fullness at my heart, that I confess I am a wee bit ashamed o’.”

“ When the steek in my father’s purse, let down by my mother’s spiritual propensities, was taken up once more by her death, we again began to float up into respectability and comparative riches ; so that we gradually resumed the status in the small village from which we had declined.

“ I was at this time about twelve years of age, and my father sent me back to the school which my mother had drank me out of ; and in the course of three years, I believe I may with a safe conscience say, that I knew as much as the master himself did ; of whom the young laird, Mr Adderfang, used to say,—‘ He would be a clever chiel wha kenn’d *all the master didna*.’

“ About this time, old Durie Squake, the precen-

tor, met with an accident which gave me temporary promotion in the kirk ; for, coming into it one dark forenoon in the winter-time, after having oiled his chanter with a drap drink, he did not notice that the door of his wee poopit had been altered, so as to swing the contrary way to what it did before ; and as it stood wide open, fronting him edgeways, it was as clean and invisible as if it had been the blade of a knife ; so that although the blind body had as usual his twa paws extended and stuck out before him, one holding his Bible and the other his pitchpipe, he ran smack up against the edge, clipping the leaf of the door with an out-spread arm on each side of it, and thereby received such a *devel*, that his nose was bashed, and the sneck sank into his forehead, as if he had been struck with a butcher's hatchet. Down fell auld Durie Squake, with a grunt and a squelch, on his back. ‘ Losh preserve me ! I aye kenned I had a lang nose, but surely it’s langer this blessed Sabbath than common !’

“ He was helped up and hame by two o’ the elders, and being a thick-skulled creature, he was soon repaired by the farrier in the village, so as to be maist as gude as new, no being muckle worth at his best, and he was at his wark again in no time ; but although his skull was sound, his voice was a wee cracked for ever after ; and now the question came, what was to be done for a precentor that blessed day ? A neighbouring minister, the excellent Mr Clour, of the parish of Thistledoup, was to preach, and by this time in the poopit, and he could sing none, I kenned ; as for auld Mr Bland, our ain pastor, he was as empty of music

as a toom bagpipe ; so baith the ministers and their hearers sat glowering at each other for a guid space, until the uproar was over, and the bum had subsided, and I was just wondering what was to be done, when I found something kittle-kittling the crown of my head. I sat, it must be known, in a wee bit back jam of a pew, just before the minister's seat, and my father aside me. I looked round—it was the auld minister —‘ Saunders,’ says he, ‘ your father tells me ye can sing fine—gae awa wi’ ye, my bonny man, into the precentor’s seat.’ I was in an awful taking ; the blood rushed to my face, and the sweat dropped from the point of my nose ; nevertheless, I screwed up my courage, and, like a callant louping into the water to bathe in a cauld day, I dashed into the Psalm with great bir and success ; but the speed I came puffed up my vanity until it burst, and I had a sair downcome that day. For finding that the precentor line was no sae difficult as I expected, I thought I would shine a bit, and at a solemn pause in the music aff I went, up and away, intil some fine tirlie-wirlies, which I could not cannily get out of again. By and by, the congregation dropped off one by one, as I ascended, until I was left alone in my glory. I started ‘ even at the sound myself had made,’ and looked up to the roof, at the auld carved wark, above what had been the altar-piece when the Catholics had the kirk, singing all the while —but a nervous thought came over me, and suddenly I felt as if I had got screwed in amongst the roses and ornaments of the auld cornice, without the power of extricating msyelf ; and how to get home again into

the *Bangor*, that I had left so recklessly, I could not divine. At length, as my variations were nearly exhausted, Willie Johnston's auld colley, Snap, deliberately walked up the aisle, and cocking himself on end, raised his voice and joined in chorus. This speedily brought me to a stand-still, for Balaam could not have been more amazed when his ass spoke than I was ; besides, I saw the folk were all laughing, until some one of them took advantage of the pause to skirl up the original tune once more, and faith but I was glad to join them.

" It was the fashion in our parish, at this time of the year, to give two sermons at one sitting, but auld Mr Clour had only brought one, and our ain minister being as hoarse as a raven, there was nothing for it but that Mr Clour should split his in two. Indeed, I heard him say, as they walked into the kirkyard together—‘ Well, friend Bland, if I maun preach twa sermons, while I hae only yin in my pouch, and nane in my head, they must just be of the shortest, for I can manage no other way than by halving it ; however, I'll gie them a gude bit screed of a psalm to sough awa at after the first half, and that will help us ‘ ayont the twall,’ as Burns says, before we begin to the second.

" The first sermon passed over, and when he gave out the Psalm that was to be the resting-place, the half-way house between the wings of his discourse, what was my dismay, to find that he, with all the coolness in life, read out six long verses ! My mouth was dry enough, and my throat husky enough with my

previous discomfiture, Heaven knows ; but I whistled away until I got to the line about ‘a dry parched land, wherein no waters be,’ when my voice fairly failed me a’thegither. I made a desperate struggle, but there was nae mair sound in me than in a clarionet without the reed, or a child’s bawbee whistle blawn dumb on the first day of the fair. So I waited for a while, and again set to, but my screech was this time a mixture of the cry of the corncraik and the hissing of a goose; besides, I had lost the tune, and nane of the congregation could find it, so I squeeled and sweltered about, until the haill kirk and pews, and the folk in them, danced before my eyes, and I could not tell whether I was on my head or my heels. At length I croaked out, ‘*Vox faucibus hæsit, domine—Vox faucibus hæsit.* As sure’s death, I can sing nane until somebody gives me a drink of water.’ At this moment I felt a slap on the cheek, which made me start and turn round, and there was the auld minister leaning ower the front of his pulpit, and girning at me like Auld Nick himself. ‘Deevil’s in the callant; has he lost the *fang** already, wi’ skirling up the Psalm but for yae half hour ?’ This drove me demented altogether, so making a rush from the precentor’s desk, I stumbled down into my father’s seat, who was lying with his head on his blue bonnet, peching and perspiring with utter shame and vexation. *I never tried the precentor line again.*

* A pump is said to have *lost the fang* in Scotland, when the sucker won’t draw.

" My father's circumstances continued to improve, and at last he found himself in a condition to send me to Edinburgh itsell, to study for the kirk; and there I continued for three years more, during session time;—after which I returned home a licentiate of the Church of Scotland no less, but with the immediate purpose of succeeding the old schoolmaster of Lincomdodie, who had about this period been gathered to his fathers.

" When I arrived, a proud man was my father of me and my acquirements; and from that time forth, he had morning and evening service every day in his family—a thing he never had before, except on Sunday.

" And, oh! there was one that welcomed me back, with a smile and a tear, and a trembling of the tongue, and a heaving of her beautiful bosom, that was dearer, far dearer to me than father or friends, although I had a warm heart for them too. It was Jessy Miller, the only daughter of Rob Miller the carrier's widow, a tall fair-skinned lassie, with raven locks, and dark hazel eyes, and a face and figure with which none of the village girls could compare.

" ' Ye are welcome home again, Saunders—heartily welcome; and you'll be glad to hear that the young led-dies at the hall—the laird's sisters, ye ken—have been very kind to me and my mother baith, and that I go up there every day to work for them; and they have made me many a handsome present, as you see, Saunders, and many a good boock have they sent me; and the young laird, Mr Addersfang, has come hame, ye will have heard,'—I started, for I had *not* heard it,—

‘ and he is really very civil to us also.’ We were speaking in a little bit green, at the western-most end of the village. There was a clump of horse chestnuts behind us, through which the breeze was rushing with a rustling sough, but it was neither strong enough nor loud enough to drown the buzzing, or rather moaning noise of the numberless bees that were gathering honey from its blossoms, for it was in June; or the rushing murmur of the clear sparkling burnie, that wimpled past at our feet, with a bit crazy wooden brig across it, beyond which a field of hay, ready for the scythe, was waving in the breeze, with the shadows of the shreds of summer clouds sailing along its green undulations, as they racked across the face of the sun.

“ At the moment when the mention of the young laird’s name by Jessy Miller, for he was known to be a wild graceless slip, had sent the blood back to my heart with a chill—a larger cloud than any that had gone before threw its black shadow over where we sat, while all around was blithe breeze and merry sunshine. It appeared to linger—I took Jessy’s hand, and pointed upwards. I thought she shrank, and that her fingers were cold and clammy. She tried to smile, but it ended in a faint hysterical laugh, as she said,—‘ Saunders, man, ye’re again at your vagaries, and omens, and nonsense; what for do ye look that gate at me, man?’

“ ‘ I canna help it, Jessy—no, for the soul of me, I cannot—why does the heaven frown on you and me only, when it smiles on all things beside?’

“ ‘ Hoot, it’s but a summer cloud, and ye’re a fule;

and there—there it's gane, ye see—there, see if it hasna sailed away over the breezy hay field, beyond the dyke there—come and help me ower it, man—come,’—and once more I looked in her bright eyes undoubtingly, and as I lifted her over the grey stones, I pressed her to my heart, in the blessed belief and consciousness that she was my ain Jessy Miller still.

“ All the summer I officiated as helper to the excellent Mr Bland, our parish minister—his nephew, who was appointed to fill the situation permanently, being still on the continent as tutor in a nobleman’s family, nor did he return until the autumn.

“ Although I never expected to have a kirk of my own, yet preaching was at this time a pleasure to me—for my intellect was strong and clear, health good, and spirits buoyant ; my heart being at ease, and Jessy Miller loving and faithful.

“ And was it not a proud thing for a parritch-fed laddie like me, to get the argument a’ to mysell for a hail forenoon, and to lay down the law to all the gentry of the country, and maybe a lord among them ; and to gie them their kail through the reek, and cry ‘ anathema maranatha’ against the vices of the rich—the temptations whereto, if the truth maun be told, I never kenned ; while nane o’ them dared so much as open his mouth to reply to me ?

“ But I had ae redeeming virtue in their eyes, for, although whiles dogmatic, I was never so downright indiscreet as to inflict lang sermons on them—a thing great folk canna thole—a half-hour till the preaching, and a quarter till the prayer, being my

maximum ; never forgetting, that a good practical sermon should be like a jigot o' wee blackfaced Highland mutton, short in the shank, and pithy, and nutritious, which every body can digest something o', frae the fistling restless callant, wi' a clue in his breeks, till the auld staid elder, wha hears ye oot as steadily—teuch as ben-leather though you may be—as if his tail were Tam Clink's anvil. So, putting the shortness o' the screed against the bitterness o' the flyte, my popularity on the whole greatly increased.—Thus mollified by success; I grew sae bland and gentle in my disposition, that I could never even skelp ony o' my wee scholars without a tear in my eye ; so that I verily believe if I could have shoved the dull creatures on by applying the tause to my ain—loof instead of theirs, I would have willingly done so.

“ But soon a wee bit cloud cam o'er me ; for I began about this time to be sair fashed with a great income.”

[I laid down the manuscript—“ sair fashed with an income—I say, Lennox”—I saw the marine in his steward-room at the moment—“ Why, Lennox, construe me this, if you please—‘ sair fashed with an income,’—that is more than ever I have been, if I take you up rightly ; but explain, if you please—was your income so *very* great ?”

“ Indeed, sir, it was large enough to lame me for six months !”

I stared—“ An income so large that it lamed you for six months—oh, you lived high—gout, I suppose ?”

“ Na, na, sir—I had never any title to gout, nor

any of my forbears ; but it was not the size of the tumor that was the worst of it ; for it contracted the sinews and muscles of my left leg to such a degree, that, after I had hobbled on crutches for six weeks, I was at last fairly driven to stump it on a stick leg, although, Heaven be thanked, I recovered entirely in a year's time."

The poor fellow saw I was laughing ; and apparently uncertain as to whether I comprehended him or not, he said—" An income is a tumour, sir ; and mine was a very bad ane."

" Oh, I see, I see ; but tell me this, Lennox—You speak very good English ; and, from all I can hear, you write it correctly—how came you, therefore, to have indited your sorrows in your north country Doric ?"

" Mair graphic, sir—I had an eye to publish, sir."

" Now, I understand—thank you"—and I resumed my study of the manuscript.]

" But I had my ain misgivings that Jessy would flee aff frae me, after all, now that I was a lameter, and I watched my opportunity to ask her frankly and fairly, ' whether we were to hold to our plighted troth, that we should be man and wife whenever I had laid by an hundred pounds from the school (I had already fifty), or that the calamity which had come over me'—I could scarcely speak here, for something rose up in my full breast, like a cork in a bottle that you are filling with water, and stuck in my thrapple like to choke me—' or that the calamity that had come over me, was to snap our vows in twain—and, Jessy Miller,

I here declare, in the presence of our Maker, if it has wrought such change in you, I release you freely--freely—although it should break my heart, I release you.'

" The poor girl's hand, as I spoke, grew colder and colder, and her cheek paler and paler, until she fairly sank on her knees on the auld grey moss-grown stone that covered the muirland grave of the Covenanters, situated about a mile from Lincomdodie, where we happened to be at the time. It was now the gloamin', the setting sun was flaming up in the red west, and his last ray fell on the beautifully rounded form of the fair lassie, and sparkled on the tear that stole down her cheek, as she held up one hand to Heaven, and grasped mine with the other.

" ' Saunders Skelp, wi' ae leg or twa, or without a leg of ony kind—if ever I prove faithless to you—may'

" ' Hillo, Dominie—Dominie Skelp—you're a nice young man, I *don't* know.'

" I started—Jessy shrieked, and rising, threw herself into my arms—and as I turned round, who should be ascending the hill, and now within a few yards of us, but the young laird himself—as handsome and buirdly a chiel as you would see in ten thousand !

" ' Did that cloud come ower us at the side of the hay-field that day for naething, Jessy ?' She could not answer me. The sun set, and one or two heavy drops of rain fell, and the lift darkened—ay, and something darker and drearier stole across my brain than the shadows which now began to settle down on the fair face of external nature. My heart fluttered for

a moment, then made long irregular throbs, and finally I became dizzy and faint, and almost fell to the ground with Jessy in my arms. ‘Was I, in very truth, in the presence of an evil spirit?’ said I to myself

“‘Why,’ said the young gentleman, ‘what has come over you, Saunders? I won’t tell, man—so keep your own secret, and nobody will be a whit the wiser.’

“‘Secret, sir!’ said I, deeply stung; ‘secret—I have nane, sir—nane—that I love the lassie, the haill parish kens, and I am not ashamed of it; but if you —ay, you, sir, or *any* man, dares’—

“‘Heyday—dares! What do you mean by that, Master Skelp?—Dares!’

“My recollection and self-possession returned at this moment.

“‘I beg pardon, sir; I have been taken by surprise, and in my anxiety to vindicate Jessy from all suspicion, I have been very uncivil to you. I am sorry for it.’

“The abjectness of this apology caused me to blush to the eyes, but it was made, as I thought, to serve my heart-dear girl, and gulping down my chagrin and wounded pride, I turned to go away.

“‘Well, well, Dominie, I forgive you, man, and I *believe* there is nothing wrong between you two after all. I only spoke in jest, man, and am in turn sorry to have given you pain; so gie’s your hand—there—and I must have a kiss from Miss Miller, the darling, or I never shall believe that you have both really and truly forgiven me.’

“We returned together to the village. I would

willingly have shaken off the youngster, but he insisted on seeing Jessy home, and as I had no plea to prevent him, I submitted in great bitterness of spirit.

“ The next day he departed for London, to my great solace, and we heard nothing of him for several months, so I once more buckled to my schoolmaster’s labours with a light heart ; and if my friends did not flatter me, I also greatly improved in my preaching.

“ At first, before I had confidence in my ain power and presence of mind, I slavishly wrote down all my sermons, and read them still more servilely, never trusting my finger neb off the manuscript, as if I had been frichtened it would have ta’en wing and flown away from under my nose ; but I gradually began to trust mysell away in a wee bit flicht now and then, like a half-fledged shillfa* with the puddock-hair on, hopping about its nest, but always ready to drop into it again, as I was into the written discourse.

“ I soon found that the parts of my preachments that were maist liked were generally the very bits thus struck off *extempore* ; so in time I took heart of grace, and only wrote down the *heads*. Before autumn I even gave this up, and began to preach *even on* and boldly, without scrap or note of any kind or description whatever.

“ That there are many eloquent men who cannot trust their memories, and have all their lives to preach written sermons, is most true ; but where a man of talent can preach *extempore*, rely upon it, he will be more eloquent and impressive than if he had undergone the drudgery of inditing the discourse before hand.

* Chaffinch.

“ And so it was with me, even me Saunders Skelp ; for, from the very first, when per force I had to write down my sermons, still even then I found my genius cribbed and confined, and held down in its soarings and highest aspirations by the written *thread* of my discourse, like a string round the leg of a tame pyot ; or if, in a moment of inspiration, I did break away, it was at the peril of getting into another vein of thocht a’thegither, which I often found cruel kittle to dove-tail cleverly into the plain jog-trot of what lay beneath my nose on the pulpit cushion ; so, finding I made but a botched business of it so long as I halted between the two opinions, I resolutely determined to write nae mair for ever.

“ But in the pride of my heart at my early success, I will not conceal that I grew about this time rather overly energetic, and my feelings whiles outran my discretion ; but I had a good friend and excellent Mentor in auld Earl M——, the principal heritor in the parish.

“ Seeing his lordship in his pew—for he didna come to the kirk every Sabbath—one fine clear day, when I was to preach, I thought I would astonish him a wee bit ; but, as it turned out, I was myself the maist astonished of the twa. It was a beautiful summer’s day. I had scarcely ever seen the outline of the mountain that overhung the village so hard and clear and sharply defined, as it hove up and out, high into the cold pure blue of the cloudless sky. The misty cap that usually concealed the bald peak, had blown off before the fresh breeze that rustled cheerily among the twittering leaves ; disclosing the grey scalp, the haunt of the

gled and the eagle, with the glittering streaks of unmelted but not unsunned snow filling the wrinkle-like storm rifts, whose ice-fed streamlets loomed in the distance, still and fixed like frozen gouts of pure sea foam, but lower down sparkled in the sun, flowing with a perceptible motion, as if the hoary giant had been shedding glad tears of dropping diamonds.

“ Still nearer, the silver chainlets of their many rills were welded into one small waterfall, that leapt from its rocky ledge, white as the wreaths that fed it ; bending and wavering in the breeze, and gradually thinning as it fell, until it blew off in smoke like the Grey Mare’s Tail, and vanished altogether, scarcely moistening the black and moss-grown stones of the shallow basin beneath. Below this, and skirting the dry region of shingle, the paired moorfowl, for the cheepers hadnna taken wing yet, were whirring amang the purple heather, that glowed under the bright sunlight, as if the mountain had been girdled in with a ruby zone ; while farther down, the sheep bleating to their lambs powdered the whole green hillside, like pearls sprinkled on a velvet mantle.

“ The kine were lowing in the valley, as they stood kneedeep in the cool burn, whisking away the flies, under the vocal shadow of the overhanging saughs. The grey heron was floating above the spungy *flows*, from spring to spring, from one dark green tuft of rushes to another, so ghostlike, that you could not tell it from its shadow ; the birds were singing among the trees ; the very crackling of the furze pods in the sun had an exhilarating and joyous sound ; and the drowsy and moaning hum of the myriads of bees, that floated

into the wee auld kirk through the open window from the plane-trees that overshadowed it, dangerous as the sound wad hae been to a prosy preacher on a sultry Sabbath, was, in my vainglory, but a soothing melody to me: for in my vainglory I said to myself, there *shall* be nae sleeping here this day. There was happiness in the very cawing of the rooks in the auld trees of the kirkyard, as they peered down at us with eyes askance, as much as to say, ‘ay, freens, there’s nae gun amang ye the day.’

“ The farmers came along cracking blithely as they looked over the sea of waving grain, now in ear, and fast bronzing under the genial sun, that covered the whole strath; the trouts were glancing and louping at the grey flies, and the ducks of the villagers were flaffing and squattering in the burn where the lassies were washing their feet, glancing like silver amang the sparkling wimples of the clear yet moss-browned water, and putting on their shoes and stockings, preparatory to their entering the sanctuary, therein differing from the heathen, who cast off their slippers at the threshold. Auld Widow Miller hersell, sober sedate body, was *keckling* with Tam Clink the blacksmith, as she came along by the holly hedge; even the hard-worked carrier’s horses, with their galled backs and shoulders, and the very banes sticking through their flanks, were frisking awkwardly with their iron joints (like so many of their wooden scaffold-supporting namesakes bewitched), in clumsy imitation of the beautiful filly there, and neighing on the other side of the hedge from you, speaking as plain as Balaam’s ass that the Sabbath was for

them also ; ay, when the very Spirit of God himself seemed visibly abroad on the smiling face of the glad earth, I could not help exclaiming — ‘ Surely, my friends, we cannot err greatly, if we veil our faces and retreat in such a day as this from before the thunders, and darkness, and earthquake of Sinai, the Mountain of the Lord, and wander away out of the bitterness and acrid atmosphere of the desert, ‘ where the Heaven over our heads is brass, and the earth under our feet iron, and the rain of the land powder and dust,’ into the quiet and fertile valleys and pure skies of Canaan ; and there, amongst the loveliness and freshness of nature, with hearts swelling with gratitude to *Him*, and love to our brethren of mankind, dwell on *His* attributes of goodness and mercy, with mixed adoration and trembling, and endeavour to sing his praises in the spirit, and with the glorious imagery of David.—Shall all the beasts of the field,’ I continued, warming with my subject,—‘ shall all the beasts of the field, and fowls of the air, and fishes, yea, shall all creatures, animate and inanimate, praise the Lord for his goodness, with one universal burst of joy ; and shall man alone, while he worships with fear and trembling, not mingle with the groan of his just humiliation a shout of heartwarm and heartfelt gratitude to the Almighty Dispenser of all this happiness around him ? ’

“ For a quarter of an hour after this I carried on fine, and was delighted to spy the auld earl’s looks of approval with the corner of my ee, the joy whereof drove me off my guard ; for at a well-turned period, when I intended to bring my right hand down thump on the

open Bible, I missed it, and smote the new elastic pulpit cushion instead, with such vehemence, that the old brazen-clasped Psalm-book spanged up, and out over into the air. ‘Kep!’ cried I; whereupon auld Durie Squake, the precentor, upturned his face, and thereby caught such a bash on the nose, that baith the lozens were dang out of his barnacles. ‘Oh Lord, my sair nose!’ (it had not recovered the blow against the door, as already related), ‘oh Lord! my sair nose is clean demolished now—I maun get legs to my specs—for the brig’s brak, and flattened in on my face like a pancake!’ I tried to get back into my discourse, but I was awfully flurried, and as, not knowing what I did, I let fly another whack on the desk, his lordship, who, I could observe, even in the swelter of my confusion, was laughing to himsell, turned up his gaisened pheesiognomy, and *girned* out—‘I say, my lad, if ye break it, ye’ll pay for’t.’ This put me daft—clean wud a’-thegether—and I drove along at so furious a rate, and stamped with my stick-leg on the stool that I stood on with such vehemence, that in my confusion down I slipped; and the bottom of the pulpit being auld and frush, the wooden tram flew crash through, and I vanished, the iron-shod end striking Durie Squake, the devoted precentor, such a crack on the tap of the head, that I thought I had felled him clean. ‘Oh dear! oh dear!’ roared Squake; ‘the callant has first bashed my neb as saft as pap’ (he was a wabster to his trade), ‘and broken my spectacles, and noo he has fractured my skull with his d—d stick-leg.’ I struggled to extricate the tram, but it stuck fast, until Tam Clink, the blacksmith, gave the end of it, as it protruded into Durie

Squake's desk, such a bang with his great heavy hand, as if it had been his forehammer, that he shot me up with a jerk like a 'Jack in the box,' into the sight of the astonished congregation again.

"I sat down utterly discomfited, and, covering my face with my hands, wept bitterly.

"A murmur ran through the kirk, and I could hear whispers of 'Puir callant, gie him time to collect his thochts—gie him time—he's a clever lad Saunders—he'll be a' richt presently.' I took heart of grace at this demonstration of good and kindly feeling amongst my fellow-parishioners, and making a strong effort, yet with a face like crimson—my lugs were burning like red-hot iron—I finished my discourse, and dismissed the congregation. As I passed out of the churchyard gate, I found the old lord there; it was a warm day, and he was sitting on a tombstone under the shade of the auld elm-tree, with his hat off, and wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, apparently waiting for his carriage to drive up. 'Ca' canny, man,' said he, as I approached—'Ca' canny, Saunders—dinna *rive* folk alang the road to heaven at that rate, man.'

"'My lord, I was seduced intil that exuberance to-day against my better judgment. It was the vanity of making an appearance before you, my lord, when I ought to have been thinking only of my Maker and the Gospel, and I have determined to humble my pride by making this acknowledgment; but I have had a sair downcome, my lord, as you saw this morning, and I deserved it.'

"'Well, well, Saunders; but Durie Squake had the worst of the *downcome*, I'm thinking. However, let

it be a lesson to you never to prostrate yourself so abjectly before a fellow-creature again, even if he should be a lord, Saunders ; but as you are a lad of talent, and I have a regard for you, you must get over this mortification speedily, lest it rankle and spoil your usefulness, for I see you are a sensitive creature. So I'll gang down to the manse and rest myself, and come back in the afternoon, when I will ask Mr Bland to let you preach again. So awa' wi' ye, Saunders ; ca' in yere scattered thochts, Saunders—and tell Moses, as you pass Lucky Mutchkin's public, to put up the horses again. Awa' wi' ye, Saunders Skelp.'

" ' Na, na, my lord—you are very kind, and I am greatly beholden to your lordship ; but I canna—I canna haud up my head in the poopit again, so soon after my signal dis '—

" ' Haud yere tongue, Saunders—ye're a fule. Gang till your room and cogitate, for preach you must and shall, this very day, and be d—d till ye. The domini'e's gane mad a'thegither, I declare.'

" I took my excellent patron's advice, and although unco blate at first, I gained courage as I warmed with my subject, so that by the time I cam till the blessing, I was myself again ; and having thus got over my mortification, I never afterwards sae far forgot myself as I had done that blessed morning."

But the humour of the following extract, which explains itself, surpasses either of the former in my estimation :—

" Next morning was the annual examination of my school, at which three ministers, one of them the celebrated Dr Soorock, were to be present, and the same

passed over creditably to myself and scholars ; and the doctor was very kind and condescending to the whole of us. He was the means of my being invited this day to dinner by Mr Bland. After the examination, we had walked a mile into the country together, enjoying the delight of the schoolboys, who had gotten a half holiday on the occasion, and were now rampaging about, like young colts broke loose, some jumping, some playing at football, others at shinty, while several were fishing in the burn, that twinkled past as clear as crystal ; and we were returning home to the manse, when Earl M——'s equipage appeared, coming along the small bridge that crossed a bend of the stream beyond the village. Presently it was hid by the trees round the manse, and then glanced on this side of them, until the houses again concealed it. In another moment it rattled sharply round the corner, when the old earl desired his postilions to walk their horses until he met us. The moment Doctor Soorock saw the carriage go slow, he accelerated *his* motion, and stepped out and away before Mr Bland and Mr Clour, salaaming with his hat in one hand, and his gold-headed cane in the other, in rather too abject a style, in my estimation, for *one who had a kirk already*. His lordship was still at pistol-shot distance, and the doctor was striding on, uncovered, with his eyes riveted on the carriage, when his foot caught on the projecting steps of the schoolhouse door, and away he went, his stick flying through the window, smashing the glass down in a tinkling shower—his hat into the neighbouring pigsty, and his wig into the burn that ran by the road-side.

“ ‘ Run, boys, run,’ said I, as I helped him up,—

‘ run and catch the doctor’s wig,’ as it floated away down the stream, like a hedgehog covered with meal.

“ ‘ Geordie,’ cried one little fellow, ‘ hook the wig with your fly, man—hook the wig with your fly.’

“ ‘ Allan is fishing with bait, his hooks are bigger,’ quoth Geordie.

“ ‘ Fling, Allan, man, fling—one guude cast, and you have it.’

“ They both missed, and the wig continued floating down until it swam amongst a flock of village ducks, who instantly squattered away from it, as if it had been an otter.

“ ‘ Cast a stane intil’t, or it will soom to Berwick before nicht,’ said wee Tam.

“ ‘ Cast a stane intil’t, Allan, man ; you mark weel,’ roared Geordie again.

“ Flash—one stone pitched into the burn, close to it, and half filled the wig with water. It was pretty well saturated before, so that when another flew with better aim right into it, it instantly sank, and disappeared in the Dominie’s Hole, as the pool was called. What was to be done ? There was a spate had suddenly come down the water, and there was no seeing into the bottom of the pool ; besides, there was not a creepy in the village, so the doctor gave his wig up for lost, as well he might, and had to cover the nakedness of the land for that day with one of Mr Bland’s Kilmarnock nightcaps. He bore his misfortune, I will say, with great equanimity ; and in the evening we all once more resorted to the schoolhouse, to hear the boys sing, led by auld Durie Squake.

“ We had taken our seats, a number of the villagers

in their best ; auld Durie had sounded his pitch-pipe, and the bits of callants were watching him with open mouth, all ready to open in full cry, like a pack of young hounds waiting for old Jowler's deep tongue, when the candle at his desk was suddenly blown out, and I called out in Latin, seeing that some of the bigger boys were close to it, ' *Quid hac rei?*' Wee Tam Stump at this loup'd off his seat with great energy, fearing he was about to be blamed : ' *Ventus played puff, Dominie, ex that broken window, et extinxit the candle.*' We had all a good laugh at this, and nothing more happened to disturb the harmony of the evening, until Allan Harden came running up the stairs, with a salmon lister in one hand, and a great dripping divot-looking thing on the top of it.

" ' What kept ye so late ?' said I ; ' you are seldom late, Allan.'

" ' I hae been dabbing with the lister the haill evening for Doctor Soorock's wig, sir ; but I have speared it at last—*ecce signum !* Dominie.'

" A tiny buzz ran amongst the boys ; auld Clour keckled audibly, and Mr Bland could scarcely keep his gravity, as Dr Soorock stirred the soaked mass that Allan had cast on the floor with the end of his cane, exclaiming—' My wig—my wig, did the callant say ? It canna be my wig.'

" ' Indeed it is yours, sir ; there's nae wale o' wigs here,' said the handsome boy, blushing deeply—' if you but try it on, sir, ye'll find it sae.'

" The wig was finally turned over to the auld barber at the village, who dried it, but the doctor had to go home in the Kilmarnock on the following day, as the scratch was ruined for ever."

Now, a small touch at the Dominie in the “melting mood,” and we bear up again on our cruise. He had returned to the parish, after having completed his education, such as it was.

“ Months passed away without any thing worth notice occurring. I met Jessy often, and although some doubts and misgivings as to the state of her heart did come over me, and shake mine sometimes, still my anxiety to acquire the plighted hundred pounds diverted my mind from allowing the doubt to fester, by confining my attention chiefly to the school. Besides, the young laird, who was now studying the law in Edinburgh, came seldom down to the auld castle than was his wont; so that altogether I began to attribute any little apparent coldness in Jessy’s demeanour, either to my own fancy, or to being piqued by the unjustness of my former suspicions. Thus I struggled on, in the hope that the sum might be made up during the next summer at latest, until which time my pride counselled me to be silent.

“ The long dreary winter drew on apace. The leaves became sere, and fell, and were whirled in rustling eddies along the hollows of the small woodland paths about the village,—and the bleak north howled on the hill-side, and moaned and soughed through the trees, and round the house,—and the herds began to fold their flocks in the evenings. One night, in particular, was marked in my memory indelibly by what occurred the morning after it. It was late in November, and the weather for several days previous had been rough and boisterous, but on this particular evening it had cleared. The full moon shone brightly as I returned

from the county town, with a wallet of wee books for my youngest class, which I had bought there that afternoon. It was eleven at night as I got to the bridge across the stream which ran past the village ; I was glouring down over the little parapet wall into the glancing water, that rushed and murmured through below the arch, and listening to the melancholy bleating of the sheep on the hill above me, and to the low bark of the colleys, and the distant shout of the herds, as the last of the stragglers were got within the circular folds, far up on the moor. Again I would look towards the village, where scarce a light twinkled, except in Tam Clink the blacksmith's shop, where every now and then a primrose-coloured jet of flame puffed up, and flashed on the blacksmith's begrimed face and hairy chest, and naked arms, and on wee Pate Clink's bit dirty face and curly pow, as the callant worked at the bellows ; but the fire suddenly gaed out, and the sparks flew from a red-hot bar in all directions, under the powerful stroke of the blacksmith himsell, until the hissing iron became of a dull red, and gradually disappeared from my eye altogether. Presently the strokes ceased—the groaning and asthmatic wheezing of the bellows subsided—and the noise of the man locking the door of his small shop showed that the last of the villagers had finished the labours of the day ; and I had time to notice that snow was beginning to fall.

“ I got home, and let myself in without disturbing my auld father, and slept soundly till daylight next morning.

“ There was none of the villagers asteer when I

got up. A sprinkling of snow, as already mentioned, had fallen during the night, which had been so calm, that the white veil which covered the dying face of nature was unsoiled and without a rent, over all the level country; and the road through the village was one unbroken sheet of the purest white, unpolluted as yet by a single footprint—what do I say? there was *one* footprint there, the recollection of which is indelible from my brain, as the mark on Cain's forehead.

As I opened the door to step forth, I noticed the mark of a man's foot, as if some one had come down the small lane, that ran at right angles with the road, and past the end of the house, towards the little projecting steps in front of the door. ‘Well,’ thought I—‘well—it may have been my father’s, or some one of the villagers may have been earlier up than I apprehended;’ and I stepped on, wondering in my own mind what made me notice the steps at all. ‘But I am a fool, for one does notice the footprints after the first fall of snow of the season with an interest that we cannot always account for,’ said I to myself, as I stepped into the path that led to the school, where I was going to light the fire. I again started as I looked down, for I now noticed, to my surprise, that the footprints exactly resembled my own, with the round mark of the ring at the end of my stick-leg distinct in the snow. ‘Why, I did not come this way home, did I?’ again communed I with myself; ‘certainly I did not; and there was no snow when I came from the school, before I set out for the town. How came these footprints here?—what can it mean?’ and mechanically I

traced them as far as I could, until the mark of the wooden leg suddenly vanished, and was replaced by the print of a boot or shoe, for a few paces farther; when the marks disappeared altogether, as if the person had turned off suddenly through a gap in the hedge. I was a good deal startled at all this—Could I have been walking in my sleep?—This was scarcely credible; I had never done so, and if I had, which I could not believe, how came my shrunk leg to be miraculously straightened on the instant? For whatever it was, man or spirit, it must have stumped along for fifty yards on a leg of flesh, and a tram of wood, and then suddenly have dropped the agency of the latter, and turned sharp into the fields on two feet, such us everyday men wear; besides, the person, whoever he was, wore iron-heeled square-toed boots or shoes; and I saw no mark of my own tackets, or round *brogue*-like toes.

“I walked on until I came to the steps of the schoolroom, in a brown study, with the crisp new-fallen snow crunching beneath my tread, and I had nearly given a second edition of Doctor Soorock’s downfall before I fairly awoke to the routine of this sublunary world, and betook myself to the unromantic occupation of lighting the fire. I sat down and took up the bellows, but it seemed I had forgotten to make use of them; for there I had been cowering by the ingle-cheek near an hour, pondering in my own mind what the footprints could mean, and quite unconscious all this time that the morning, in place of getting lighter, had settled down very dark. The wind had also suddenly risen, and the branches of the auld elm that overshadowed the schoolhouse were groaning

and rasping on the ridge of the roof; and Betty Mutchkin's sign, that hung on the opposite side of the road from a long projecting beam, as if it had been a flag, was swinging and creaking on its rusty hinges before the angry gusts, as they tore down the small valley. At length I was startled by the fury with which a hail shower dashed against the window at my lug, utterly demolishing in a minute the sheet of brown paper with which, until the village glazier sobered, and got a pane from Edinburgh, I had *battered* up the fracture occasioned by Dr Soorock's cane, when he was humbling himself, and bowing down before the golden coronet on auld Earl M——'s carriage.

“ ‘ Dear me,’ said I, ‘ what a day ! It’s but gloomy without, and I’m no sure that it’s very cheery within ; for there’s a weight that has been lang accumulating at my heart, and now it has grown heavy, heavy. The lift will clear, and the spring will come again, and all nature, as if risen from the grave, as we puir deevils hope to do, will resume its primeval beauty ; but a seared heart, a blighted soul,’—and I gave a heavy sigh, while the very bellows on my knees seemed suddenly to collapse of themselves, as if in sympathy, and to puff out an echo to my groan.

“ I felt a rough shake on the shoulder. ‘ What *are* you sitting groaning at there, Dominie ?’ said my father, who had entered unseen and unheard—‘ what are you grunting and graning at the fireside on such a morning as this for, Saunders, when you should have had a bit cheery fire in the ingle for the drookit school-callants to dry themselves at, instead of dreaming with the bellows on your knee, and the fire black out ?’

"I looked, and it was even so. 'I dinna ken, father, I am ill at ease; but if I am spared'—

"'Nonsense!' quoth the hasty old sutor; 'get up, Saunders, and clap a fresh spunk to the fire, whether you're spared or no, or I'll tak ye siccán a clamhewit with my stick,'—The good old man the next moment, however, saw how it was with me, and relenting said—'but come awa hame like a decent callant, and tak yere breakfast, man; and you will have scrimp time to eat it, let me tell you, for see,'—pulling out an old turnip-shaped horologe, with great steel hands—'it is within the twenty minutes of school-time already.'

"I made an effort, lighted the fire again, and rousing myself, went forth with him towards our dwelling. The snow was fast disappearing under the pelting of a heavy shower of sleet, that had succeeded the hail-storm, and a loud clap of thunder shook the firmament as we arrived at home. I started—'It's no common to hear thunder at this time o' year, father.'

"'Come in and tak your breakfast, sir—the deevil's in the gaumerell, that I should say sae.' I did so in silence, and returned to the school, where I found myself without my hat, my hair wet and dripping, and the back of my neck chilled, from the lodging of the hail within the cape of my coat.

"One of my dreamy fits had again come over me, which, however, I struggled hard to overcome; so I sat down at my small desk, and unlocked my drawer, from whence I took out the tawse and laid them on the closed Bible, as a terror to evil-doers; and placing my watch beside them, I waited the entry of my scholars. First one wee drooked chiel came in, and

syne another, but most of them were beyond the time, for the day was bad, and after they had all taken their places, there was a perfect volley of hoasting. I could not skelp any of them for being late that morning.— About half an hour had elapsed, and I had set the boys to some task; there was a loud hum in the school, from their murmuring voices, and I was looking out towards the road, at the swollen stream, that I saw but last night sparkling and tinkling over its more than half-dry channel, in a tiny stream that I could have stepped across, but that now surged along brimful, in a red discoloured torrent, tearing the trees and pailings, and whatever else it could reach on its banks away, and rolling them down with such fury, that I expected to see the arch of the small bridge sink and disappear, like a wall going down before the strokes of a battering-ram. A group of the villagers on the opposite side from where I stood were fishing out the floating timber for firewood; but my attention was soon attracted to the carrier's cart from town, that was coming along the road, with auld Humpy himself—that was the man's name that had succeeded poor Jemmy Miller in his vocation—and his wee son Andrew, cocked up in the front of the cart. The river continued to rise, and covered a bend of the road, which the cart was now approaching; it entered the water, which the horse was making flash up in all directions, until it reached the axle, but it gradually shoaled again, and the vehicle was on the point of reaching the dry part of the road, when, like a shot, man and boy, and horse and cart, disappeared amidst the roaring eddies.

"I ran out; the villagers had noticed the accident also; we all hurried to the spot. The horse was struggling and snorting, and standing on his hind legs, between the trams, in a vain attempt to get free from the cart that was dragging him down the stream, but auld Hemy had disappeared.

"'What's that? There's the callant, there's the callant—see his bit head sooming down the stream like an otter'—

"I saw it, threw off my coat, and plunged in; but the upshot was, that although Tam Clink the blacksmith saved the *child*, the *dominie* was near drowned; for I found to my cost that a stick-leg wasna canny to soom with, the buoyancy thereof producing a corresponding and very dangerous depression of the caput.

"We saved the boy; but the horse and cart, and Hemy himself, were all drowned; it was the first time, I mind, that I had ever seen a dead corpse. The puir auld chiel was a stout buirdly man—he might have weighed sixteen stone; but when we gat him that forenoon, after the river had cast him ashore, stark and stiff, and carried him, and laid him out in the kirk aisle, it was fearful to observe how he had shrunk in bulk after the water had ran oot o' him; it wasna aften he took muckle o' that same in, so it was a sure sign he was dead; his stomach having fallen, had left the arch of his deep chest in fearful relief, and then the pinching of his blue features and the death-girn on his upper lip, that showed his twa buck teeth as if in anger—It was a maist awfu' sicht.

"'What! are you frichtened, Saunders?' said a

voice close to me—‘ are you frichtened to look on a dead man, dominie? If you had been in Paris with me last summer, man, you would have seen a dozen lying every morning in the Morgue—ay, as nice and caller as if they had been haddies in a fishmonger’s shop?’

“ I looked up at the heartless creature. ‘ He was the father of a family, Mr Adderfang, and that drooked and shivering callant, that’s greeting there at the head of the corp, is his son ; and mair forby, he was a tenant o’ yeer ain, sir, and —

“ He turned fiercely—‘ Keep your sentimentality for your next sermon, sir ;’ and he looked at me with a withering scowl that sent a chill to my heart. I felt a blighting of the soul that I would not willingly have acknowledged—a sort of crushing consciousness, that the person before me was in very deed my evil genius ; but the *consciousness* of such a feeling drove me in the present instance to return his savage look as haughtily as it was given ; and I made a sudden motion with my hand, which made him start back, and grasp the sma’ end of his long hammer-headed hunting whip.—‘ I say, dominie, I do not *quite* understand you this morning ; but, by G—, sir, if you give me an opportunity I will read you a lesson that is not in your primer.’ —And he raised his whip threateningly. He was, as I have before mentioned, a tall well-put-together man, as we say in Lincumdodie, and far more than a match for me, at my best, when I had twa legs, and therefore incomparably my superior in bodily strength and acti-
vity, maimed as I now was. However, I took no time

to consider of all this, but making a sudden spring, I wrenched his whip from him, and as he swerved from me, he fell over the trestle whereon the body of the carrier lay, and upset it, to the great horror of the bystanders ; and there lay, side by side, the living scoffer and the dead corpse. A murmur of something that hovered between applause and disapprobation buzzed amongst the group of villagers ; and the wee callant cried loud and bitterly, when, as the laird was in the act of gathering himself up, Mr Bland himsell entered the kirk, and with more sternness in his countenance than I had ever seen there before.

“ ‘ Mr Adderfang,’ said he to the young man, ‘ what is the meaning of all this ? — Is it becoming in a gentleman of your rank to desecrate the House of God by heartless and ill-timed levity, first of all ; for I have heard the story from one of my elders ; and then to threaten an unoffending schoolmaster—ay, sir,’ —for here Adderfang seemed on the point of contradicting the minister—‘ ay, sir, and, to the credit of your discretion be it said, a maimed man, too ? Was this decent ? was it gentlemanly ? ’

“ Here the poor wife of the carrier, with her clothes dripping with water, and splashed with red clay stains from the miry road, without her mutch, her grey haffits clotted with rain and perspiration over her blue and shrunken features, and with her lip quivering, rushed into the church.

“ ‘ Whar is he—whar is he—whar is my Willie ? ’ The instant her eye rested on the body she gave a long loud shriek, that echoed along the roof, and fell

down on it senseless. We had the poor woman removed, and by that time Mr Adderfang had disappeared."

* * * *

But the plot was fast thickening both with the dominie and poor Jessy Miller.

Widow Miller's humble domicile was divided from the house where our friend the dominie reposed, by a narrow lane. It stood three or four yards back from the frontage of the neighbouring cottages, which afforded space for a small parterre of flowers, at one time the pride of poor Jessy's heart, and watered with her own hands ; but many a hot tear had lately trickled on their leaves, down the poor girl's pale and faded countenance, and strange rumours had become rife in the secluded village of the flower of the whole strath having been tainted by the blight of some scoundrel. Her anxious and altered appearance, and the evident misery of the poor widow her mother, were melancholy proofs of the correctness of the surmise.

Gradually the sough settled down on Saunders Skelp—for who so likely to be the cause as the avowed lover of the girl, and, as people thought, her betrothed husband?

The report of Jessy's misfortune soon reached the person whom it most concerned. At first it fairly stunned him, and then such crushing misery overwhelmed the poor fellow's whole soul, when he became convinced of its truth, that it nearly drove him mad altogether.

The morning after he had been made acquainted with

the heart-breaking fact, the dominie was sitting dejectedly at the breakfast-table (with his elbow planted quite unconcernedly in the very middle of the plate *amang the het parritch*), opposite the auld *betherel*,* who was munching his food in silence, and eyeing his son every now and then with a most vinegar aspect. At length he broke out—“ Braw wark, dominie—braw wark ye have made o’t atween ye.” (The poor fellow raised his disconsolate visage, and looked innocently in his parent’s face.) “ Ay, you may look surprised Saunders, but that sham sheep face will no deceive me ; for—God forgie me, but I wonder the sicht did not turn me intil stane—I marked you come out o’ Jessy Miller’s window this blessed morning at grey daylight, stick-leg and grey coat, just as you sit there, as plain as I see ye the noo.”

The poor fellow was roused almost to madness at this unjust and most cruel aspersion, and denied most vehemently that he had been out of the house that morning at all. But the old man *threeped* that he saw him bodily stump through the wee garden, and disappear round the corner, where he had no doubt he had stolen in by the window of his room that fronted that way, but which he could not see from where he stood.

“ It couldna be me, father ; as I sall answer to God it wasna me. My wraith it *may* have been.”

“ If it was *your* wraith, Saunders, it wasna the wraith o’ a *timmer-leg*? for there are the prints of ane

* Betherel, or minister’s man. *Anglice*, beadle.

to be seen till this blessed moment, amang the flowers o' the garden and the glawr of the lane. Tam Clink will vouch for this as well as me, for he saw you too."

Saunders, half crazy at this damning tissue of circumstantial, although false, evidence, rose and went out to satisfy himself. After inspecting the foot-marks, for there they were, sure enough, he returned to the house, and the first thing he did now was to gobble up his food, scalding hot as it was, as if he had been perishing of hunger. He then rose, and was rushing down stairs distractedly—when lo ! who should enter but Mr Bland the minister ?

Here there was a new scene of crimination ; and the poor creature was like to have made an end of himself in his despair, for when he seized the big "ha' Bible," and was about making oath upon it to his innocence, the minister took it forcibly from him.

" Not in my presence, young man—not before me shall you imprecate the curse of the Almighty on the head of a perjurer."

" Minister, minister, wad you hae my death—the death maybe of sowl and body—lie at your door ? Send for Jessy Miller—lost creature as she is—send for her. She will not—she cannot condemn me."

" Jessy Miller, sir !—the oath of a limmer like her is no worth a wunnglestrae."

At this he sprang forth like a wild-beast when the goad is struck into him, and out to the hill-side, nor did he venture home that night.

Listen.

" The snow had fallen about the dawning, and, be-

numbed with cold, I was returning from my night-lair on the damp hill-side towards the village, with a determination to flee the bounds thereof, after once more trying to undeceive my auld father ; for it was a dreary thocht to travel forth burdened with my ain misery, and the heavy load of a father's curse forby. As I came down the small lane, and got my first glimpse of Widow Miller's house, I stopped to take a last look at the bit bourock that sheltered her for whom, only twa days gane, I would have shed my reddest heart's-blood rather than sin or sorrow should have scathed her, or come near her dwelling. It was as yet scrimp daylight, naebody was stirring. The only indication of life (barring the twittering of the birdies in the trees, and the crowing of the cocks) was a thread of blue peat smoke rising from a cottage in the village, here and there ; but the east was fast reddening, when lo ! I saw the window of Jessy's room open gently, and, *what shall I say—what did I see*—but a wooden-leg, so sure as I was a sinful man, protrude therefrom ! I went blin'—I went blin' ;—as I saw myself, grey frock, timmer-tram and all, jump into the wee garden, open the small wicker-gate, and stump away in the direction of the manse.

“ I was petrified with astonishment, frozen to the spot, until my wraith, for assuredly I considered it nothing else, arrived at the gate leading into the minister's garden, when it turned ; and then, as if in great alarm, suddenly rushed through the small gate and disappeared. I was roused, and now started off in pursuit at the very top of my speed, but reached the gate only in time to see the figure clear the holly hedge

that screened the front of the manse, at a bound, with the wooden-leg unstrapped and flourishing in its hand, and vanish beyond it. I had then to make a small detour to get through the wicket in the fence ; but before I got round, whatever it might have been, it was nowhere to be seen.

“ I ran up to the door in breathless haste, and, early as it was, began to knock furiously for admittance, without well thinking what I was about. No one answered, and an open window on the ground-floor now attracted my attention. I looked in—and who should I see snoring on ‘the bred of his back,’ in his wee fold-down pallet, but young Moses Bland, the helper, with—I went frantic at the sight—the ghost of my ain wooden leg lying across the body !

“ ‘ Now I have run the fox to earth,’ said I.

“ ‘ And wha makes such an indecent uproar at the door, at such an untimorous season?’ quoth *the auld minister*, from an upper window.

“ ‘ It is me, sir—I Saunders Skelp, wha ye hae sae unjustly maligned, minister. Gude forgie me that I should say so.’

“ ‘ Off with you, ye scoonrel,’ quoth the usually mild minister—‘ off with you, sir, or I’ll make you repent it.’

“ ‘ Na, minister, when you are cool, you will yoursell repent your conduct to me. Here, sir, tak your cloak about you, and come down *here*—you’ll soon see that the evildoer is nearer a-kin to you than Saunders Skelp.’ ”

The minister came down, and now there was the

devil to pay between him and his helper ; but the latter protested his innocence so vehemently, that at length the dominie was unceremoniously ejected, with the additional accusation sticking to him, of having in cold blood, and for purposes of deceit, actually made a duplicate of his wooden-leg, in order to cast the blame on young Mr Bland. He was thus on the eve of getting set deeper and faster in the mire than ever, when in came the betherel and Tam Clink, who, being on the watch, had seen Saunders pursue his own *double* towards the manse, so that Moses Bland once more became the subject of suspicion.

The affair was largely canvassed that forenoon at a meeting of the elders, and the injurious surmises were gaining strength against poor Moses, notwithstanding his frantic protestations that he “kenn’d na whether Jessy Miller was man or woman.” But Saunders, when he brought his sober judgment to bear on the matter, was the first to acquit him, for his kind heart would not allow him to believe that his tried friend and old schoolfellow, the helper, could be guilty of such atrocious conduct ; while something whispered him that his evil genius, William Adderfang, was the villain ; however little appearances in the mean time might tend to such a conclusion.

During that day, the mysterious transaction of the *double* got wind in the village, and every ingle cheek was filled with the sound of keen disputation. The fact of the apparition was unquestionably proved by Tam Clink and the betherel, putting Saunders’ own evidence out of the question ; but whether it was the deil

himself, or a dweller on this earth, afforded large scope for doubt and argument. Tam Clink was inclined to believe in the mortality of the duplicate Saunders, "as he had weel examined the counterfeit tram, and it was sound maple, with nae smell of fire ava, let abee brim-stane," and Tam was a judge. It happened to be a holiday at the small school, so the poor fellow again stole away to commune with himself on the hill-side, and to escape the gaze of his humble acquaintances.

It was a most beautiful breezy forenoon, and from the spot where he had planted himself, he had a bird's-eye view of the *duke's* hounds, on the opposite swell of the river-divided valley, and the whole field of gallant sportsmen. It was the last day of the season, and in the cover they were drawing, that was alive with red coats and white hounds (the latter diminished by distance to a handful of hailstones pattering and glancing among the dark bushes), the whips, and three *scoonrel shields* were busy digging out a litter of cub foxes from one of the earths, amidst a chorus of merry voices and loud laughter. Presently the old bitch broke cover from another mouth, when the whole pack opened most musically, and away went the jovial party as hard as they could split, their tallyho's making the whole strath ring again.

At first, the fresh air and quiet loveliness of nature had gradually stolen over his soul in spite of himself, and stilled its troubled heavings, like oil calming the stormy waters of the sea; and now the exhilaration of the scene, like the flowing tide lifting a stranded vessel off the rocks, was imperceptibly lightening that more

perilous stuff, the duller load of misery that pressed closer and more suffocatingly on the poor fellow's heart—when lo! just as the foxhounds disappeared from the river, the wasted form of poor Jessy Miller was seen slowly and painfully crawling up the hill towards where the dominie sat, leaning on her staff, and feeble as an infant.

He saw her from the first, but could not move—something nailed him to the spot. She approached, but for a minute was so breathless and exhausted, that she could not speak—"Saunders Skelp!"—at length moaned the poor broken-hearted girl—"Saunders!—ye are going to tak the sacrament the morn," she paused, and leant, "*peching* on her staff," as the MS. hath it—"Ay, Saunders, ye are going to commemorate our Saviour's death, and—and—I am gaun to dee, Saunders."

"The tears ran down her cheeks, and I was like to be worried mysell, for greet I couldna.

"'Saunders. Is it no written, that if thou hast ought against thy brother, thou shalt leave thy gift before the altar, and first go and be reconciled unto thy brother?'

"'Even sae—sae is it even written, Jessy.'

"'Time *has* been when you often said I was dearer till you than mony sisters—but that's past and gane—gane like the last winter's snaw; yet is Saunders Skelp's hate sae deadly that he refuses to tak off Jessy Miller's parting and sin-clogged soul, the grievous weight of his own bitter, bitter curse.' She waited lang for an answer, but I gied her nane.—'I cam to ask yere forgiveness, Saunders—and *I hae asked*

it'—here she grat as if her heart was bursting—‘ and —and—oh God, whom I have offended, cast me not off in this my utmost need—and *I have been refused*—one struggle more, and my task is ended, Saunders’—and she caught my hand in baith of hers whether I would or no—they were cauld, cauld as lead—‘ I hae deserved this ; but haud my heart, *I didna expect it*—Saunders, I have only now to say God bless you, and to bid you fareweel for ever.’ She sank down on the whin-stane at my feet—the fiend had seared my heart harder than it, and I never even offered to help her up.

“ I thought she was *awa awthegither* ; at last, gathering strength, she spak the last words I ever heard her utter.

“ ‘ I am come to clear Moses Bland, and to richt you, Saunders.’

“ Oh, the sweet low music of that mournful voice !

“ ‘ The young laird—Mr Adderfang’—she *gasped*, it could nae langer be called speaking—‘ that *serpent*, William Adderfang, has been the ruin o’ me—ruin here, and—and—condemnation in the world to come.’

“ She bent her head, and hid her face with her wasted fingers, through which the hot tears fell fast as the rain-drops in the breeze from the shower-bedashed tree above us—when the sound of hound and horn once more swelled in the gale ; and first the fox came over the wall above us, then the whole pack, tumbling tumultuously one over another down the face of the rocky precipice, twinkling hither and thither, and dropping from stone to cliff like the breeze-scattered

foam of a cataract, *then one solitary cavalier, who was dashed, horse and man, to the ground, close to us where we sat*, the rider falling senseless, and the blood flowing from his mouth and ears. The gallant horse, however, struggled to get on his legs again, until he reached the brink of the old quarry close beneath us, over which he rolled, dragging the wounded man along with him by the stirrup, and disappeared, rattling and rasping among the loose stones and bushes. Jessy was roused in an instant ; she had caught a glimpse of the wounded man's face as he was dragged past her, and giving a loud shriek, as if her heart had split in twain, dashed herself down the precipice after him, and vanished for ever from my eyes amongst the furze—*it was William Adderfang !*

The issue of all this complicated misery was the unfortunate girl being carried home, and that night prematurely confined of a dead child—*she never saw the sun rise again.*

As for the poor Dominie, although his character was cleared both by Jessy Miller on her death-bed, and ultimately by Adderfang himself, his heart was nearly broken ; indeed, the blow was heavy enough to “drive his wits a wee bit ajee,” as he phrased it, ever after. In this half crazy, half desperate condition, he suddenly left friends, and house, and home, and wandered about the country, until his means of subsistence failing, he enlisted into the militia ; and afterwards, as related by Serjeant Lorimer, into the marines, on the reduction of the former. •

Enough and to spare of the Sorrows of Dominie

Skelp ; those who desire more must wait until he publishes them : but the Midge is but a little vessel, and a heavy episode would swamp her. So—

“ Here, Mr Peak,” struck in Dick Lanyard, who was standing close beside the small open skylight,— “ clap on that purchase, and take a small pull of the main-halyards, before we keep away, do you hear ? Belay all that. Now, Dogvane, put the helm up—so. Let draw the foresheet there.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

And once more the wicked little Midge buzzes along free.

CHAPTER XII.

GAMBLING—AN UNLUCKY HIT.

THE day wore on without any thing worth relating. At length I was disturbed by a loud burst of laughter on deck, and adjourned to the open air. The first thing that struck me was poor little Dicky Phantom, a close prisoner in a turkey basket—a large wicker cage-looking affair, that we had originally brought from the frigate with poultry. He was crying bitterly.

“ Dogvane, what has the child been doing that you have imprisoned him in this way ? ”

“ Why, sir,” said Mr Weevil, the purser, “ it is a vagary of Lennox’s. The child was certainly nearly overboard to-day, so, for fear of accidents, he has chosen to coop him up in this fantastical manner, as if he had been a turkey.”

“ Poo, poo—release him. Here, Dicky, come out, will you ? ”

I undid the latch, and the little fellow crept out on all-fours. As soon as he was at large, he laid hold of the cage, and would have thrown it overboard, if I had not prevented him.

“ No, no, Master Dicky, it is a good idea of Len-

nox's ; and mind, whenever you are a bad boy, in you go again."

" I was not bad boy," said the urchin ; " Lennox' big mens were bad boy."

" How, Dicky, how ? "

" Oh, dem shame poor Quacco—see, see, dere."

I looked foreward, and noticed Quacco coming on deck through the fore-hatchway, a very extraordinary-looking figure certainly. It seemed that our sable friend had missed muster twice running ; so the men thought they would fall on a method of curing him ; but before they could put it in force, they had to imprison poor little Dicky, who was much attached to the negro, and evinced great grief when they commenced operations.

Their plan was this. They got some molasses, and anointed his woolly pate as he slept, and then, with the cook's dredging-box, they plastered the same over with flour, and left him in his hammock, in place of rousing him out to take his morning watch. They thus converted his pate into a regular cockroach trap, for those horrible beetles crowded from all corners of the 'tween-decks, and settling down on the molasses and flour, soon got their feet entangled and their wings besmeared in such a way that they could not start either tack or sheet, but were glued in a living web of abomination to the poor devil's head. I took Dicky in my arms, and Quacco toddled aft. Although I was angry, I could not help laughing at the figure he cut, with his white head, like a large cauliflower, bespangled, not with

bees, but with large brown beetles, who were fluttering with their wings, and shaking their long feelers or antennæ, and struggling to get their legs out of the bog of treacle and flour ; while the poor fellow, half asleep, was as yet in a great measure unconscious of his situation. At this nick, Old Lanyard came on deck.

“ Who has done this ? I say, men, if you make a beast of the poor devil in this way again, mind your hands—that’s all. Here, cook, take Quacco into the bows, and let your mate scrub him clean.”

“ Why, we shall have to cut his wool out, sir.”

“ Hair, if you please, Massa Draining,” interjected the culprit himself ; “ sheep hab wool—black gentleman wear hair.”

“ Yes, and he should pay the powder tax,” said I, laughing against my will.

“ Well, well, Drainings,” continued the lieutenant, “ do as you please, but have him cleaned instantly ; his appearance, with those crawling insects amongst the wool—hair, I beg pardon—is shocking ; so forward, Master Quacco, and be scrubbed.”

“ Ay,” quoth little Dicky, “ forward Massa Quacco, and be scrub ;” and great was the laughter and shouting at the shearing of Serjeant Quacco.

* * * * *

“ What is that flying on board the Gazelle, Mr Peak ? ” said Lanyard.

“ The signal to chase in the north-west, sir.”

“ Mast-head there,” the lookout-man answered ; “ do you see any thing in the north-west quarter ? ”

"No, sir," replied the man.

"Very well. Turn the hands up, Mr Peak, and make sail."

This was accordingly done ; and, after having hauled our wind about an hour, we saw the vessel, which the frigate had seen so much sooner than us in consequence of the greater height of her masts. We chased the whole forenoon ; and, as we rose her, made her out to be a large merchant-ship under all sail, evidently desirous of avoiding the pleasure of our society if she could ; for, verily, like the ugly face of many an honest man, our appearance was far from being the best of us, our rig being deucedly roguish.

By five o'clock in the afternoon we were within half a mile, when we hoisted our colours and pennant, and fired a gun to make our friend heave to ; but this she declined to do, and we now guessed that she was one of the large London traders. There were, we could see, a number of people on deck, some of them apparently passengers.

"Why, Mr Wadding," said Mr Lanyard to the gunner, "he seems determined to lead us a dance ; we must send the next shot nearer him."

The old man was looking through the glass at her. "If I don't mistake, they are training two guns aft, sir, there, through the stern-ports ; and she must have a crew of some forty hands, I think, from those I see on deck. There are a number of *amphiborous*-looking people besides on the poop—passengers, I suppose—busy with muskets, sir. If he per-

sists in refusing to let us board him, he will bother us a little."

"That is his look out," said Dick. "Set every rag that will draw; pack on her, Mr Marline, and clear away both guns. Pipe away the cutter's crew, boat-swain, and see they are properly armed." Then to me—"I say, Benjie, any objections to a lark—Mr Marline is going in the boat, eh?"

"None in the world—so here's with you, Master Marline, my boy."

I went below to dress myself, and as I was putting on my jacket, bang, I heard a gun fired at us.

"Call Mr Brail, Lennox," said Mr Lanyard. "Tell him the chase has run out two stern chase-guns, and has just fired at us."

I came on deck as he spoke.

"Did the shot come near you, Mr Marline?" continued Lanyard.

"It whistled right over our masthead, sir—it was very well aimed."

"Never mind, haul as close by the wind as you can, and gain the weather gage if possible. I want to creep alongside on his weather quarter."

This was done; and seeing that we sailed so much faster than he did, and that, as we hauled up across his stern within musket-shot, with both guns pointed at him, we could rake him if we chose, he did not venture to fire again. Presently we were within hail, and found that it was the Roger Beresford, or some such name, from London, bound to Antigua.

“ Heave-to, and I will send a boat on board of you.”

But although his fight had considerably evaporated, yet he seemed noways inclined to do this thing, even after he had been told who we were, and that the vessel astern was his Majesty’s frigate the Gazelle. He kept his people all at quarters, and I noticed that his broadside consisted of six twelve-pound caronades, and a long gun amidships ; rather too many pills for a comfortable dose to so small a hooker as the Midge, if he should prove obstinate, besides the absurdity of the thing in being peppered by one of our own merchant craft, through a vagary of the master’s.

As we approached, one of the muskets of the motley group that were clustered on the poop went off, apparently from awkwardness or accident, which the others took for a signal, and four or five were let drive, but fortunately mighty wide of their mark.

“ Mr Peak, fire that musket close over the heads of these heroes.”

Crack—the whole bunch bobbed, as if they had seen the bullet coming ; and immediately the gallant band tumbled down, one over another, on the quarterdeck, in much admired disorder. We ranged close alongside, with the boat towing astern, ready manned and armed, and all hands at quarters. This formidable manœuvre seemed to quail the courage of the chase a little.

“ I shall board you, whether you will or not, my fine fellow ; so round to this instant, or I fire into you.”

Seeing Lanyard was angry and in earnest, he now did as desired. So we were presently on his deck, when we found he was a running ship, who, not liking our appearance, had very properly tried to escape in the first instance, and, finding that impossible, to fight, if need were, in the second. All his papers were right, and I had time to take a squint at the passengers. There were several ladies on board—three, I think—an elderly one, and two very handsome girls. They were now all on deck, surrounded by the male passengers, the Spartan band who had made such a hostile demonstration on the poop, some of whom cut rather conspicuous figures, in their shooting jackets, with bran-new red turkey leather pocketbooks peeping out of the numberless pockets, and gay seal-skin caps, and natty waistcoats, with lots of chains and seals—every thing, in fact, of the newest and gaudiest—and oh for the murder and piracy of his Majesty's English amongst the Cockney crew! One spruce young fellow—the youth whose musket had gone off by mistake—had chosen to equip himself, sailor fashion, jacket, trowsers, and white vest, with a straw hat and black ribbon, and lots of bright brass buttons, all astonishingly fine. He kept swaggering about the deck, on which, by the way, he could hardly stand, and twice, rather unceremoniously, thrust himself between me and one of the young ladies, to whom I happened to be speaking. I determined to give him a fright. So I tipped the wink to Marline.

“ Dogvane, order the boat's crew on deck.”

“ Ay, ay, sir.”

“ Now, captain, have the kindness to muster your people, if you please.”

The man remonstrated, but the midshipman insisted ; and presently the poor fellows were ranged on the lee-side of the quarterdeck, each in momentary dread of being selected as pressed men.

“ Why, sir,” persisted the captain, “ I solemnly protest against this ; we carry a letter of marque, sir ; and it is more than your rating is worth to take any of my hands. I solemnly protest against such conduct.”

Marline apparently gave in.

“ Very well, sir ; but we must be manned by hook or crook, you know, however unwilling to distress running ships. Oh, I see—*there* is a smart hand, in the gay jacket there, who does not seem to belong to your crew—a good seaman, evidently, by the cut of his jib.”

This last part of his speech was intended to be overheard by the fresh-water sailor with the brass buttons, who now toddled up—the vessel was rolling a good deal—smirking and smiling—“ Why, captain, I have paid great attention since we embarked, and really I have become a very capital sailor, sir. Do you know I have been twice through the lubber’s hole ? ”

“ Really ! I knew you were a thorough good bit of stuff ;” and then in a gruff voice, “ so hand up your bag, sir, and step into the boat.”

“ Hand up my bag, and step into the boat ! ” said the poor fellow, all abroad ; “ my bag ! la, sir, my clothes a’n’t packed, and why should I go into *your* boat ? ”

“ Simply,” said Marline, slapping him on the shoulder with force to make him wince again, “ that you are the very man I want. Your nautical air and speech have betrayed you, sir ; and I can see with half an eye that you are second-mate of some vessel ; I therefore press you into the service, to serve his Majesty on board of his gallant frigate the Gazelle there”—pointing to her, as she was fast coming up astern.

He shrank back in great alarm.

“ Lack-a-daisy, sir, it’s all a mistake—I am no sailor, sir—I am Joe Wilkins the draper, son of old Joe Wilkins, number so-and-so, Coleman Street. Me a sailor ! my wig ! ”

I laughed.

“ Well, well, Mr Joseph Wilkins, I begin to think I may be wrong ; but never pass yourself off for a sailor again, lest worse come of it ; and never take firearms into your hands until you learn how to manage them. Why, sir,” continued Marline sternly, “ you were the cause of five musket shots being fired at us, and the blood of men who were doing no more than their duty, sir, might have been spilt by your swaggering.”

As he spoke, Joey had gradually crept away towards the companion, and by this time nothing but his head was above deck. I made a sudden spring at him, when he vanished in a moment, amid a volley of laughter from all hands. We now made our bows to the ladies, apologizing for any little alarm we might have caused, and bidding the captain good-by, were speedily at home again.

The period was now approaching when we were to part company, the Gazelle for Jamaica, and the Midge for Havanna; and on such a day, Lanyard having received his orders, we altered our course a point or two to the northward, and lost sight of the commodore before the night fell.

Nothing particular occurred until we arrived within a couple of days' run of Havanna, when we made out a sail lying becalmed right a-head. We carried the breeze up to within half a mile of her, when it failed us also; and there we both lay rolling on the glass-like swell of the great Bahama Channel, one of the hottest quarters of the globe in a calm that ever I was in. The heat was absolutely roasting. The vessel we had seen was a brig with bright sides, which, as we approached, had hoisted a signal of distress at the mizen peak, the American ensign, with the stars down, and the stripes uppermost. A boat was immediately manned, and pulled towards her, for apparently she had none of her own. I went in her—any thing to break the tedium of a sea life. As we neared her, the crew, some six or eight hands, were seen running about the deck, and holding out their hands imploringly towards us, in a way that I could not account for. As we came closer, the master hailed in a low husky voice, “For Heaven's sake send us some water, sir, we are perishing of thirst—water, sir, water, for the love of God!” We were now alongside, when three men absolutely *tumbled* over the brig's side into the boat, and began, before we could recover our surprise,

to struggle who should first get his lips into the small puddle of dirty water in the bottom of it. Brackish as it must have been, it was drank up in a moment. The extremity of the poor fellows was evidently great, so I jumped on deck, and the boat was immediately sent back for a breaker of water.

Sailors have their virtues and vices like other men, but I am not arrogating for them when I say, that a scene like this, in all its appalling bearings; that misery, such as we saw before us, so peculiarly incidental to his own condition, would, were it from this cause alone, thrill to a sailor's heart, with a force unknown and undreamt of by any other human being. Dogvane, the old quartermaster, had steered us on board. He now jumped up in the stern sheets, and cast off his jacket—" You, Jabos, you limber villain," said he to a slight boy who pulled the foremost oar, " come out of the bow, and take the tiller, will ye? and mind you steer steady. Shift forward, my hearties, and give me the stroke oar." The boat's crew at this hint tore their hats off, with a chance of a stroke of the sun before their eyes, and dashed them to the bottom of the boat, stripped up their frock sleeves to their armpits, undid the ribbons that fastened their frock collars, new-fitted their stretchers, and wetting the palms of their hands, feathered their oars, and waited for the word. " Now mind your strain, my lads," again sung out old Dogvane, " until the boat gathers way—no springing of the ash staves, do you hear? Give way now." The boat started off like an arrow—the oars

groaned and cheeped, the water buzzed away into a long snow-white frothy wake, and in *no time* she was alongside the felucca, on whose deck, in his red-hot haste, the quartermaster first toppled down on his nose, and then, scarcely taking time to touch his hat to Mr Lanyard, we saw him bundle down the main hatchway; in another moment a small cask, ready slung, slowly ascended, and was rolled across the deck into the boat. But this was not all ; the Midges on board the felucca were instantly all astir, and buzzing about at a devil of a rate—out sweeps was the word, and there was the black hull of the little vessel torn along the shining surface of the calm sea, right in the wake of the boat, by twelve long dark sweeps, looking for all the world, in the distance, like a beetle chasing a common fly across a polished mirror blazing with intolerable radiance under the noon-day sun.

It appeared that, first of all, the brig had been a long time baffled in the Horse latitudes, which ran their supply of water short ; and, latterly, they had lain a whole week becalmed where we found them. Several days before we fell in with them, they had sent away the boat with three hands to try and reach the shore, and bring back a supply, but they had never returned, having in all likelihood either perished from thirst before they got to land, or missed the brig on their way back. No soul on board, neither captain nor crew, had cooled his parched tongue for eight-and-forty hours before we boarded them—*this in such a climate !*

There was not only no water, but not a drop of liquid unconsumed of any kind or description what-

ever, saving and excepting some new rum, which the men had freely made use of at first, until two of them died raving mad in consequence. When I got on board, the cask was lying open on the tap, and, perishing as they were, not one of them could swallow a drop of it if they had tried ; they said it was like taking aquafortis or melted lead into their mouths, when at any time they were driven, by the fierceness of their sufferings, to attempt assuaging their thirst with it. I had not been five minutes on board, when the captain seemed to go mad altogether.

“ My poor wife, sir—oh, God, she is dying in the cabin, sir—she may be dead—she must be dead—but I dare not go below to look at her.—Oh, as you hope for mercy at your dying day, hail your people to make haste, sir—half an hour may be too late”—and the poor fellow dashed himself down on the deck, writhing about, like a crushed reptile, in a paroxysm of the most intense agony ; while the men, who were all clustered half-naked in the bows, with wet blankets on their shoulders, in the hope that nature would in this way absorb some moisture, and thus alleviate their sufferings, were peering out with their feverish and blood-shot eyes, and wan faces, at the felucca ; watching every motion on board with the most breathless anxiety.

“ There, there—there is the cask on deck—they are lowering it into the boat—they have shoved off—oh, great God in Heaven, we shall be saved after all !” —and the poor fellows raised a faint hurrah, and closed in on me, some shaking my hands, others drop-

ping on their knees to bless me ; while one poor creature lay choking on the hard deck in a fit of hysterical laughter, as if he had been a weakly woman.

The boat could not possibly be back under ten minutes ; so I went below into the cabin, and never did I behold such a heart-rending sight. The small table that had stood in the centre had been removed ; and there, stretched on a coarse wet blanket, lay a half-naked female—pale and emaciated—her long hair dishevelled, and hanging over her face, and down her back, in wet clotted strands, with a poor miserable infant puling and nuzzling at her wasted breast ; while a black woman, herself evidently deep sunk in the same suffering, was sprinkling salt water from a pail on the unhappy creature and her child.

“ Oh, massa,” cried the faithful negress—“ oh, massa, give missis some water, or him dead—I strong, can last some time yet—but poor missis”—and here she sobbed, as if her heart would have burst ; but the fountains of her tears were dried up. The white female was unable to raise her head—she lay moaning on the deck, and mumbling audibly with her dry and shrunken lips, as if they had been ossified ; but she could not speak.

“ Keep a good heart, madam,” said I—“ we have sent on board for water—it will be here in a minute.” She looked doubtfully at me, clasped her hands together above her child’s head, and seemed to pray. I ran on deck—the boat, in an incredibly short time, was alongside again, with the perspiration pouring

down the flushed faces and muscular necks of the kind-hearted fellows in her—their duck-clothing as wet and dank as a boat-sail in a race.

“ Now, Dogvane—hand up the breaker—quick, man, quick.” My request was unnecessary ; it was on deck in an instant ; but before I could turn round, the men of the brig made a rush aft, and seized the cask, making a vain attempt to carry it forward ; alas ! poor fellows, they had not the strength of children. We easily shoved them aside, as it was necessary they should not get water-logged by too free a use of it at first.—“ Now, Dogvane, mind what I tell you—make that small tub there full of five-water grog—no stronger, mind—and serve out a pint to each of these poor fellows, and not a drop more at present.” I seized a glass of the first of it, and ran below. “ Here,” said I, to the black servant—“ here, take a mouthful yourself, and then give some to your mistress.” She shook her head, and made as if she would have helped her mistress first ; but the selfishness of her own grinding misery conquered the poor creature’s resolution ; and dashing, rather than carrying the glass to her mouth, she ravenously swallowed the whole contents in a second, and then fell flat on the deck with a wild laugh.

“ Oh, massa, I can’t help it—nobody love missis like Juba ; but once I taste him, I could not help it for de life-blood of me, massa. Oh, my eye, my eye like cinder—like red-hot bullet dem is, massa—oh, for one tear, one leetle tear—oh, dere come one tear ; but God, God, him is hot more as boiling rum, and salt—

ah, ah, ah"—and the poor creature rolled about the deck in the uttermost distress.

The master of the vessel had by this time entered, and lifted up his wife into a sitting position ; and there she sat, with her parched mouth all agape, the black fur on her tongue, and with glazed and half-shut eyes ; her pinched features, and death-like complexion evincing fearfully the strength of her sufferings.

He poured some water into her mouth, but she could not swallow it ; he tried again, and from the gurgling noise in her throat, I thought she was suffocating, especially as I noticed, as if conscious that she was departing, she now clutched her poor wasted baby to her shrunk bosom with all the little strength she possessed. But she *had* swallowed a little, and this revived her ; and after several other trials, the poor fellow had the happiness to see his wife snatched from the jaws of death, and able to sit up by herself with her back against the locker. She now began to moan heavily, and to rock herself to and fro over her helpless, all but dead infant, as it lay, struggling faintly, and crying with its small imploring voice, on her knee ; at length she acquired sufficient strength to gasp out, " God bless you, sir—God bless you—you have saved my child, and all of us—God bless you," —and then resumed her moaning, as if she was suffering something that she herself could not describe. I sent on board for more water, and some tea and other small luxuries from my private stock ; and that same evening, as the sun was setting, under a canopy of glorious clouds, beneath which

the calm sea glowed like molten gold, gradually melting into gorgeous purple, I saw a small dark ripple ruffling its mirror-like surface in the east, and gradually steal down towards where we lay. The next moment I felt a light zephyr-like air on the palm of my wet hand as I held it up. Presently, as the grey cat's-paws became darker, and fluttered down stronger and nearer to us, and were again withdrawn, and shifted about, shooting out and shortening like streamers, Mr Peak sung out, “There, there's the breeze at last, sir, there;” and the smooth shining canals that divided the blue shreds of ripples gradually narrowed, while the latter increased and came down stronger, until the whole sea to windward was roughened into small dark waves, that increased as the night fell, and both the Midge and brig were buzzing along on their course to Havanna before a six-knot breeze.

The next evening we were under the Moro Castle, where we anchored. At daylight on the following morning we ran in through the narrow entrance, under the tremendous forts that crown its high banks on each side, and anchored before this most magnificent city, this West Indian Liverpool; while its batteries and bastions, with the grinning cannon peering through numberless embrasures, the tall spires and towers, the highest of the houses, the masts and drying sails of numberless vessels, with their gay flags, British, American, French, Spanish, and of almost every country in the world, were glancing bright and fresh in the early sunbeams, under a float-

ing canopy of thin blue smoke from the charcoal fires. All which magnificent description goes for this much : the unsentimental Dons were doffing their night-caps, and donning their breeches, while the fires were lighting to prepare their coffee and chocolate.

That forenoon I went on shore, and delivered my letters to Mr M——, one of the most extensive English merchants in the place, a kind and most hospitable man. He invited me to dine with him, and to accept of a bed at his house in the evening, both of which were too good offers to be sneezed at. We had a very large party at dinner, composed of a lot of Mr M——'s clerks, several masters of merchantmen, and the captain and two lieutenants of an American frigate lying there, all three of the latter, by the way, extremely pleasant men.

There was one of Mr M——'s adherents present, a very odd creature, and rather a wildish one, an Irishman ; what his real name was I forget now, but he was generally called Listado. His prime object during dinner was to quiz the Americans, but they took it very good-naturedly. He then tried his hand on me, in what I believe is vulgarly called trotting, which is to get one on his hobby, and appear to listen most anxiously all the while, although every one but yourself sees you are made to show your paces more for the amusement of the company than their information. At length I saw through the rogue, and dismounted, laughing heartily at the cleverness with which he had paraded me.

In the evening, the mercantile members of our

party retired to the counting-house, the American's returned to their ship, and I strolled about the town until the night fell, when I returned by appointment for Listado, with whom I went to the opera, which far surpassed any thing I expected to see or hear in that quarter of the world. After it was over, we adjourned to some lodging-house or tavern in the neighbourhood, and perpetrated the heinous sin of eating a heavy supper, for which I paid afterwards, as will be seen.

It so happened that the aforesaid Monsieur Listado had given up his bed to me, and slept himself on a small pallet beside the wall in the same room. At the right hand of the head of my bed, a lofty door opened into an adjoining room, a large dreary unfurnished apartment, with several packages of goods scattered about on the floor. On examination, I found there was no window in it, nor any light admitted except through the door into our room, which was the only opening into it. It was a regular *cul de sac*.

We must have been some hours asleep when I awoke, or thought I did, pretty much the same thing so far as my feelings at the moment went, lying on my back, with my hands crossed on my breast, like the statue of a knight templar. These said paws of mine seemed by the way to be of an inconceivable weight, as if they had actually been petrified, and to press so heavily on my chest as to impede my breathing. Suddenly one of my little fingers grew, like Jonah's gourd, to a devil of a size; and next moment the

thumb of the other hand, as if determined not to be outdone by the minikin on the left, became a facsimile of a Bologna sausage ; so there I lay like a large lobster, with two tremendous claws. My nose then took its turn, and straightway was converted into one of Mr M——'s cotton bags, that lay in the store below, containing three hundred-weight, more or less.

" Oh ! " said I now to myself, " what a fool I have been ! Nightmare—nightmare."

" Hookey, but it isn't though," said Listado.

" Hillo," said I to myself again—for I was quite certain I had not spoken—" how the deuce can Listado answer my *thoughts*, which I have never uttered ?"—And I tried to ask him, but my nose, or the cotton bag, would not let me speak. " Why, it must be nightmare," again thought I to myself.

" The devil a nightmare is it," again said Listado.

And I now began to take fright in earnest ; when, on the opposite wall, for I could only see in the direction of the foot of my bed, a gradually increasing gleam of pale glow-worm-coloured light fell ; streaming apparently through the door that opened at my shoulder into the large lumber-room already described.

The light seemed to proceed from the further end of this apartment, because the shadow of one of the boxes of goods that lay scattered about the floor was cast strongly against the wall of my room at the foot of the bed.

" What can this mean ? " for I knew from actual

survey the geography of the apartment from whence the glare proceeded ; “ what *can* this mean ? Some trick of Listado’s. Snapdragon, snapdragon.”

“ Snapdragon be d—d simply,” quoth Listado’s voice once more.

“ Heyday,” quoth I.

But there he lay, full in the stream of light, apparently sound asleep ; and so transmogrified under its baleful influence, that he looked more like a corpse than a living man.

“ Murder ! what comes next ?” groaned I—for I could now speak—as the shadow of the figure of the poor woman rescued from perishing with thirst on board of the American brig glided along the wall with her infant in her arms and her clothes in disorder, the wet blanket which the poor negro had been moistening, when I first saw her, hanging from her shoulders, and her hair dishevelled ; her figure, in fact, in every point precisely as I had seen her in the cabin. The apparition seemed to pause for a moment, and then stepped towards the box of dry goods, and setting itself down, began to rock itself and moan ; and the poor picaniny began to struggle and pule at its mother’s bosom for all the world as naturally as it had done in the brig.

“ There’s a phantasmagoria for you, Master Benjie ;—free gratis for nothing, Master Benjie,” said I to myself ; whereupon my thumb, of the size of the Bologna sausage, took my nose, of the size of the cotton bag, such a crack ! I thought it was knocked off. Presently I felt as if the latter had been set a-bleed-

ing so furiously as to float the bed off the floor, and me in it. By and by the room became filled with blood ; and there I lay, cruising about in the floating bed, until the door gave way, when the crimson torrent rushed down stairs like the rapids of Niagara, bursting into the other sleeping apartments in its descent—I could hear the suffocating coughs of the inmates as they were drowning. At length, the blood having had vent, the bed once more subsided, and took the ground on the very spot from whence it had originally been floated. The light on the wall, however, was still as strong as ever, but had changed from the moonlight tinge to a hot, deep red glare, such as the devils break out of rocks with in theatres.

The shadow of the box had disappeared, and so had the figure of the poor woman and her child ; but I now heard a noise as of some one singing snatches of the Carnival of Venice to himself, and dancing as if practising a new step, with occasionally a tap tap on the floor, as if the performer had been the owner of a wooden leg.

“ Come along, my lad,” thought I ; “ why, what next, what next ?”—on which the figure of a man, dressed in the old-fashioned coat commonly worn by physicians in Havanna, with frills at his wrists, and tight inexpressibles on, glided across the wall and disappeared. Presently I was conscious he was in the room, which became suddenly hot and choky, and, in fact, standing at my bedside, for I could hear some one breathe, although I had not the power of turning my neck to look at him.

“ Have the kindness,” said he, in some unknown tongue, but which was quite intelligible to me—“ have the kindness to let me feel your pulse.” Scarcely knowing what I did, I held out my hand. “ Your nose, if you please,” quoth the physician ; on which he took it, big as it was, between his finger and thumb, and gave it such a squeeze, that it burst with a noise like thunder, and instantly relapsed into its former shape. At the report, I could hear the sentries on the walls a mile off, hailing—“ quién viva, quién viva,” along the whole line. The figure now came forward, so that I could see him. He was a tall and very handsome man, but his complexion, pale and ashy, had the self-radiant appearance of steel at a white heat ; indeed the glow of his face was like to roast my skin into parchment. His features were good, but there was rather a peculiar cast in his eye. He wore a black silk cowl, which stuck out a little over his ears on each side, as if two small horns had been concealed under it ; and he was dressed in deep black. One leg was symmetry itself, but the other was shaped like that of a satyr, and ended in a hoof ; however, the shank was covered with a silk stocking, and the hoof by a curiously-shaped shoe, made by Hoby to fit with wonderful neatness.

“ You will do very well now,” said he, “ so I will see how Mr Listado comes on ;” and, as he turned to where he lay, I saw a small barbed tail, glowing like red-hot iron, protruding from between the voluminous skirts of his coat, that corruscated, and sent sparks all about the room. It kept twisting about like a live

eel, and jerking in a fidgety manner ; and I was puzzling myself how it did not burn the cloth of his skirts, when my attention was fixed on what the figure was doing. Listado was still sound asleep ; there was a basin of water on a chair close to his head ;—the figure dipped the end of the tail into it, when it instantly began to boil furiously, so that the spray of the bubbles, as they frothed and poppled about, burnt Listado's face, and he awoke.

“ Who has scalded me in this way ? ” quoth he.

“ Only have patience, my dear sir,” said the physician ; “ it is all meant kindly,—merely to season you ; merely to season you.”

“ Season me—season me to what, d—n me”—quoth Listado in a fury.

“ With all the pleasure in life, my dear sir,” said the figure, nipping off the tail of Listado’s exclamation as if it had been a leech in the hands of my friend Majendie ; “ I will do any thing to oblige you, and d—d you shall be with all the comfort in life ; only wait a moment ;”—and he thereupon took a small very natty toasting fork out of his coat pocket ; but, in the act, burnt his fingers against his red-hot tail. “ Curse the tail,” quoth he, as he pulled out the joints of the fork, until it was about a yard long. All this while Listado, blasted by the deep red glare into a dark crimson, lay like a big lobster newly boiled, looking at the physician’s preparations, apparently fascinated, and without the power of motion. The figure now locked at me over his shoulder, and winked knowingly, when some vapour, like an escape from

the safety-valve of a steam-boiler, puffed out of his mouth ; but he apologized, and said, he had been smoking, although the flavour had more of brim-stone than tobacco in it. “ Good by, Mr Brail ; I will come for *you* by and by.”—“ You need not hurry, my dear fellow,” thought I ;—and so saying, he, with all the coolness in life, clapped the fork into Listado’s stern-frame, and, begging pardon for the trouble he was putting him to, lifted him, writhing like an impaled frog, on the instrument, and as if he really had been no heavier. He then calmly walked right through the solid wall with him, as if it had been a cloud, and disappeared. I could hear Listado roaring lustily all the while, and the physician making numberless apologies, always concluding with “ I shall be as gentle with you, Mr Listado, as your request to be d—d will permit.”

At last the sounds died away, and I began to think of going to sleep ; when an instrument that I at once knew to be our friend the physician’s fork was thrust into me from below, through the mattrass. “ Hillo, hillo, hillo,” roared I ; “ this will never do, by”—

“ What the devil do you grunt and growl so much in your sleep for ?” shouted Listado.

“ Devil !” quoth I, rubbing my eyes ; “ oh ! confound the poached eggs.”

About a fortnight after this, Listado and I, along with one of the young American officers, looked in at a monte-table and staked our doubloon a-piece ; both of my friends lost, but I was most unaccountably fortunate ; for, without knowing any thing of the game,

or the chances of it, I found, when I rose to go away, that I had no less than fifty doubloons in my fob. As we left the house I noticed a stout, dark-complexioned young man, with great whiskers, dressed, like most of the others present, in a light gingham coat and white trowsers, but without either waistcoat or neckcloth, eye me very fiercely. He had been one of the heaviest sufferers by my winnings ; and when I rose, he followed me. I thought nothing of this at the time, and walked on with the American and Listado, who had agreed to adjourn to a tavern to sup together ; but I had had enough of suppers for some time, and therefore parted with them at the street corner, and bore up alone for Mr M——'s.

It was by this time near twelve o'clock at night, very dark and gusty ; and as I proceeded, the rain splashed in my face, and there were several flashes of lightning, followed by loud claps of thunder. By one of the former I thought I saw the person from whom I had won so much, skulking behind a pillar that formed part of a colonnade in front of one of the public buildings ; and I will not conceal that an uneasy feeling arose in my mind, as I recalled the numberless stories of Spanish vindictiveness to my recollection.

“ Poo, poo,” said I to myself, ashamed of my weakness—“ all romance, all romance.” As I spoke, I was nearly blinded by a flash of lightning, and clapt my hand to my eyes. “ Ah—what is that ? ” I exclaimed, as I received a blow under my fifth rib, on the right side, that made me stagger to the wall. Another flash showed me the figure of the man,

gliding rapidly away into the darkness. I put my hand to my side, and felt the blood streaming down. I had been wounded, and was becoming faint, faint. I tried to proceed, but could only stagger against a pillar, to which I clung. I could no longer breathe—every thing swam around me, and I became deadly cold. “I am gone!” I gasped out, as I sank on my knees, and leant my head against the wall. “Oh God, forgive my sins, and receive my soul—My mother—bless my poor mother!”—

* * * * *

When my recollection returned, I was lying on a low bed, or *quatre*, without curtains or canopy of any kind, in the middle of a very large and lofty room. It was greatly darkened, but I could perceive, from the bright pensiles of light that streamed through the crevices of the closed shutters, that it was broad day. For some time, as my consciousness gradually awoke, I lay watching the motes dancing and revolving in the sunbeams, and then looked up towards the bare timbers of the floor above me. “Where *can* I be—and what *has* happened?” I murmured to myself.

“Hush!” said a low female voice close to me—“hush! Doctor Delaville says you are not to speak, sir,—not even to turn, if you can help it.”

“Doctor Delaville—not speak! Call Lennox, will ye?” and I again began to waver.—“Mr Marline, how is her head? Oh, my side—merciful Providence! what has befallen—what *is* wrong with me?”—as I tried to move round in order to see the person who had spoken. I effected my purpose so far as to

half turn my face from the light—"Oh, Heaven have mercy on me!—my senses are gone, and I am mad." I shut my eyes, and under this heart-crushing belief, wept bitterly.

There was a large balcony or open window in the wall of the apartment farthest from the street, towards which I had turned my face, that opened into a room beyond, at a height of about three feet from the floor. It was fitted with shutters opening inwards, like those of the external windows. The saloon into which I looked was apparently a lofty room, and lighted, so far as I could judge, entirely from the roof. I also inferred that this part of the house projected back from the main building, and that it was lower, and overshadowed by green trees; for the light that shone from above was subdued, and green, and cold, and more like moonlight than that of the sun. On the walls beyond I could see pictures; and a piano stood near the window, and several sofas were scattered about, so that it appeared better furnished than most houses I had seen in the place; and I knew, that although I was certainly not in Mr M——'s house, neither was I in that of a Spaniard. There was a very handsome geranium, in an ornamented porcelain jar, in the window, which, in some measure, impeded my view at the top; although near the sill there was only the solitary stalk, naked of leaves. Presently, as my eyes got accustomed to the twilight, I noticed gloves, and bonnets, and several large green fans, lying on a table beyond the window, as if this had been the retreat of some of the females of the family;

all continued as still as death—and the coolness and freshness of the apartment I looked into, was grateful beyond belief to my feverish eye and swimming brain. By and by I heard a rattling and creaking volante drive past, and the shouts of the driver to his mule, which excited me ; and I once more asked the person who was sitting knitting beside me, where I was. “ Hush, hush—until the doctor comes,” was still the answer,—and I again turned my eyes in the direction of the balcony, and gloated on the flowers and leaves of the noble plant on the window-sill, which seemed jet black, as they twinkled in the breeze between me and the light. I could now hear the sea-breeze set in, and rush amongst the branches of the trees, and moan through the long galleries and lofty apartments of the house—slamming a shutter to here, and making a door bang there, and rustling the shawls, and bonnets, and female gear in the boudoir.

The effect of this on my shattered nerves was delightful ; and, for the first time since I had recovered my recollection, I lay back with my heart full of gratitude to the Almighty for his mercy towards me. I now remembered that I had been wounded, and began to piece together in my mind the transactions at the gaming-table, and the various circumstances that had preceded my sallying forth, and wondering who had been the good Samaritan who had poured oil and wine into my wounds. I again looked earnestly round. “ There—what do I see—who is that—*what* is that? Oh, I am mad—I am mad—and

all this is a dream.” I looked again. The soft mysterious light already mentioned now floated over the figure of a tall and very handsome young man, dressed with great simplicity—a blue jacket, red striped shirt, open at the collar, with his loose black neckerchief untied, the ends hanging down on his bosom, and white trowsers. He was seated at an easel in the boudoir, under the geranium, and close to the window, with his profile towards me, a palette and paint-brush in one hand, while with a finger of the other he seemed to be in the act of tracing a line on the canvass before him. His complexion was very dark and sunburnt, his mouth and nose beautifully formed, and his forehead, on which the cold light from above was cast clear and strong, was very high and pale, contrasting finely with the bronzing of his lower features ; his hair especially caught my attention—it was black, glossy, and curling. “ Great God ! is it *him*, or his disembodied spirit ?”

A young female, who until this moment I had scarcely noticed, stood behind his chair, and bent over him, looking also earnestly at the half-finished painting on the easel ;—a tall and light-formed girl, very pale, and wearing her hair dressed high on her head without any ornament whatever ; she was habited in a plain white frock, low cut at the bosom, with a pale green band round her waist, and had one of her beautifully-rounded arms extended over his shoulder, while the other rested on the back of his chair, as, with lips apart, she pointed to some particular part of the painting.

Both continued so perfectly immovable that I could not even discern his breathing, nor the heaving of her lovely bosom. “Were they beings of this world? —was it him in very truth?” At this moment the leaves of the trees above were agitated by the passing breeze, for small twittering shadows were suddenly cast on the faces and figures of the group, so as to alter the expression of the former in a startling way, making them flit and gibber, as it were. I thought some horrid change was coming o'er the spirit of my dream, as I exclaimed,—“Oh, no, no!—he is gone, poor fellow—gone—cold at the bottom of the sea—and I am mad—Oh God, I am a lunatic!” And I once more shut my eyes and wept, until I thought my very heart would have burst in twain; but they were blessed tears, for they revived me, and my soul felt lighter as I again thanked Heaven for my deliverance, and tried to convince myself that all I had seen was but the phantoms of my weakness. A minute might have fled before I looked up again, but the lovely delusion was gone, as the servant or nurse who was attending me, perceiving me so excited by what I had seen in the other apartment, had risen and closed the window-blinds; thus shutting out every thing in the room beyond from my view.

The doctor now arrived, and, sliding up to my bedside, made his enquiries as to how I felt, and was greatly pleased with my amendment. “This will be great joy to all of them, sir,” said he, in broken English; “so, Mrs Gerard, give your patient his draught, and after the sleep I hope it will procure”—

I interrupted him. “ Pray, doctor, how long have I been ill?—and how is all going on in the little Midge?—and in whose house am I?—and who were the young lady and gentleman that I saw ?”

He laughed. “ Why, Mr Brail, you have fired off one whole broadside of questions at me ; but rest satisfied—all is right on board of de leetle vessel ; and you are in my friend Mr Duquesné’s house, who (if you will only take my advice, and try and obtain some rest, for you have not slept since you were wounded a week ago) will have the pleasure of paying his respects to you—and Miss Helen Hudson, too, longs —But I declare I am forgetting my own instructions—so not vone oder vord, monsieur,—not vone vord.—Adieu until de afternoon.” And he vanished out of the room in the same noiseless cat-like way he had entered it.

To obtain any information from the nurse that sat beside me, I knew was out of the question ; so I took the medicine, and soon fell into a balmy sleep.



END OF VOLUME ONE.



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